Loiterings In Old Fields

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Loiterings in Old Fields

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By

JAMES B. KENYON

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CONTENTS

PAGE
I. TENNYSON IN NEW ASPECTS........ 7
II. WILLIAM MORRIS—POET, SOCIALIST, AND MASTER OF MANY CRAFTS... 51
III. JOHN KEATS........................ 85
IV. GEORGE ELIOT....................... 115
V. DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI AND HIS SISTER CHRISTINA................ 149
VI. THE CORRESPONDENCE OF JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL................ 175
VII. THE LETTERS OF ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON....................... 211

I

TENNYSON IN NEW ASPECTS

Loiterings in Old Fields

I

TENNYSON IN NEW ASPECTS

Now that the biography of Alfred Tennyson has been given by his son to the world, an accurate portrayal of a great and unique personality is made possible to the general reading public. Not that the novel aspects of Lord Tennyson's character and works are new to the elect few who were his tried and intimate friends, but that the misconceptions of the late laureate's life history will finally be removed from the minds of those to whom for half a century his name has been synonymous with the noblest functions of a bard. At length this prince of song takes his place in that clear light of truth and high renown where to see him is to love him for what he was within himself, as well as for what he wrought of profit and delight to the world.

The year 1809 is a memorable one, since it records the nativity of Alfred Tennyson, William E. Gladstone, Charles Darwin, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Richard Monckton Milnes (Lord Houghton), Edgar A. Poe, Abraham Lincoln, Frederic Chopin, and Felix Mendelssohn. Few single years in a century are so fruitful in greatness. Of right Tennyson's name takes its place at the head of this list, as he was *facile princeps* among his compeers. In him the mental restlessness, the earnest gropings toward the solution of moral problems, the almost despairing grasp upon the great, isolated, undemonstrable verities of the spiritual life, the certain yet conservative trend toward democracy—all characteristics of the age in which he lived—found their mysterious junction. He became, more than any other eminent thinker of his day, the representative voice of his generation. He was intensely conscious of his prophetic calling, being burdened all his life with the sense of a divine gift for the proper employment of which he must render due account. He was wont to say that sometimes the weight of his responsibility in this direction became well-nigh insupportable. But he never prostituted his large powers to ignoble ends. It might be written of him, as he himself wrote of Wordsworth, that he "uttered nothing base."

To preserve unimpaired his poetic talent and freedom Tennyson was willing to endure years of neglect and what was little better than poverty. Some of the shifts to which he was put before his general recognition as a great poet were of an almost sordid kind; he rode in third-class passenger coaches, scarcely better than cattle cars, and when he could not afford to ride he walked. He borrowed books because he could not afford to buy them, and on the few trips he was permitted to take he sought the cheaper lodging houses because he could not afford to patronize better ones. He did not wed the woman of his choice until many years after he had first met and loved her; and in the interval of his poetic silence, when for ten years he gave nothing to the public which had scoffed at his muse, the engagement between himself and Miss Sellwood was terminated, as there seemed to be no prospect that he would ever be able to provide for a wife. Yet his high spirit was never broken, his manly independence was never compromised.

Alfred Tennyson was extremely fortunate in his friendships. From the beginning of his college days to the end of his long life he numbered among his friends some of the rarest spirits of the century. Fine minds gravitated toward him by a kind of natural law. Samuel Rogers, Edward Fitzgerald, James Spedding, W. E. Gladstone, Frederick D. Maurice, Edward Lear, G. F. Watts, Thomas Woolner, Robert Browning, Thomas Carlyle, Benjamin Jowett, F. T. Palgrave, William Allingham, J. M. Kemble, Henry Taylor, John Tyndall, Richard Monckton Milnes, G. S. Venables, Aubrey de Vere, W. M. Thackeray, John Forster, Henry Hallam, A. H. Clough, Matthew Arnold, and the Duke of Argyll—these were among those whom Tennyson knew and loved best. The supreme sorrow of his life was in the death of his most warmly cherished friend, Arthur Hallam. Tennyson's affection for this young man was singularly pure and deep. Hallam was engaged to Tennyson's sister, and was possessed of a subtle and commanding intellect. Among his college friends the consensus of opinion was that he — Hallam — and not Gladstone was the coming great man. When Arthur Hallam's life was suddenly terminated Alfred Tennyson was plunged into the profoundest grief. For years he brooded upon his sorrow, valiantly meeting the specters of his own mind and subduing them, until out of the stress and anguish of that bitter period came "In Memoriam," the noblest elegiac poem to be found in any language of the world.

To prepare a just and adequate memoir of any eminent person requires a peculiar combination of qualities in the writer thereof—complete sympathy with the subject in hand, entire familiarity with the biographical data accessible, an even and well-balanced judgment, and unerring taste in the selection of material to be presented. In Hallam Tennyson's memoir of his illustrious father these qualities are combined in pleasing measure. A quiet reserve is manifest, such as characterized the poet himself in his attitude toward the public at large, but this reticence concerns mainly those more private affairs which are sacred to the domestic life. Yet even here the curtain is lifted now and again, affording charming glimpses of a great genius off guard and at ease in the serenity of the home circle. It is not the purpose of the present writer to review the two stout octavo volumes in which are gathered by filial duty and affection the memorials of a rich and exalted life. To many who would peruse them with interest the price of these books will be prohibitive. Hence are set forth in the following pages such facts as have corrected the writer's own impressions of the late laureate and his environment and shed new light on some phases of his life and work.

No man more resented the impertinent inquisitiveness of a curiosity-loving public than did Alfred Tennyson. This feeling, experienced early in life, deepened and intensified to the end. Its degree may be partially determined by the following indignant lines:

> And you have miss'd the irreverent doom
> Of those that wear the poet's crown;
> Hereafter, neither knave nor clown
> Shall hold their orgies at your tomb.
>
> For now the poet cannot die,
> Nor leave his music as of old,
> But round him ere he scarce be cold
> Begins the scandal and the cry;
>
> Proclaim the faults he would not show;
> Break lock and seal; betray the trust;
> Keep nothing sacred; 'tis but just
> The many-headed beast should know.

The lion-hunting tourist was abhorrent to him. He was very nearsighted, and once when walking on the downs with a friend he saw some sheep which he mistook for tourists making toward him. He turned and fled incontinently for home. Tennyson desired that his life should be read in his published works. His son says:

> Besides the letters of my father and of his friends there are his poems, and in these we must look for the innermost sanctuary of his being. For my own part I feel strongly that no biographer could so truly give him as he gives himself in his own works. . . . He himself disliked the notion of a long, formal biography, for
>
> None can truly write his single day,
> And none can write it for him upon earth.

Alfred Tennyson was born in his father's rectory at Somersby in Lincolnshire. The "long gray fields," the fens, the sluices, the wolds about his early home impressed him deeply, and so stimulated his young imagination that he almost "lisped in numbers." Edward Fitzgerald writes: "I used to say Alfred never should have left old Lincolnshire, where there were not only such good seas, but also such fine Hill and Dale among 'the Wolds,' which he was brought up in, as people in general scarce thought on."

Alfred was the fourth of twelve children born to Rev. George Clayton Tennyson and Elizabeth Fytche. There were eight sons and four daughters, most of whom, it is averred, were more or less true poets. Of Alfred's earliest attempt at poetry he says:

> According to the best of my recollection, when I was about eight years old I covered two sides of a slate with Thomsonian blank verse in praise of flowers for my brother Charles, who was a year older than I was, Thomson then being the only poet I knew. Before I could read I was in the habit on a stormy day of spreading my arms to the wind, and crying out, "I hear a voice that's speaking in the wind," and the words "far, far away" had always a strange charm for me.

The latter statement will be interesting to those who recall the poet's beautiful lines beginning, "What sight so lured him thro' the fields he knew." It was on the lawn of the old rectory that Tennyson made his early song, "A spirit haunts the year's last hours." In his youth the laureate was an intense admirer of Lord Byron, whose influence is unmistakably revealed in the adolescent publication, *Poems by Two*

Brothers. On hearing of Byron's death—April 19, 1824—"a day," he says, "when the whole world seemed to be darkened for me," he carved on a rock the words, "Byron is dead."

Tennyson was well-born. He had the inestimable advantage of good blood and right breeding. The poet's father was a man of dominating intellect. He was a Hebrew and Syriac scholar, and became proficient in the Greek language that he might teach it to his sons, whom he himself prepared for Cambridge. The rector of Somersby was endowed with a splendid physique, standing six feet two, and was an energetic and powerful man. Alfred inherited these noble physical proportions. Of the poet's great bodily strength Brookfield remarked, "It is not fair, Alfred, that you should be Hercules as well as Apollo." In proof of his notable muscular power it is related that when showing to some friends a little pet pony on the lawn at Somersby, one day, he surprised the spectators by taking it up and carrying it. Fitzgerald said, "Alfred could hurl the crowbar further than any of the neighboring clowns, whose humors, as well as those of their betters, knight, squire, landlord, and lieutenant, he took quiet note of, like Chaucer himself." Of the tender-heartedness of the poet's mother it is recorded that the boys of a neighboring village used to bring their dogs to Mrs. Tennyson's windows and beat them, in order to be bribed to leave off, or to induce her to buy them. One source of amusement at the rectory was "the writing of tales in letter form to be placed under the vegetable dishes at dinner, and read aloud when it was over." It is stated that the future laureate's tales "were very various in theme, some of them humorous and some savagely dramatic," and that his brothers and sisters "looked to him as their most thrilling story-teller."

Though much ill-advised criticism was passed upon Tennyson at the time of his elevation to the peerage, the poet was a Tory by right of birth. His views of democracy were always of a conservative nature. This conservatism is well illustrated by his oft-repeated praises of the restrictive character of the fifth article of the American Constitution. Regard for the rights and duties of birth beat in the laureate's blood. Tennyson's mother was Elizabeth Fytche. "The Fytches were a county family of old descent. The first name on the Fytche pedigree is John Fitch of Fitch castle in the North, who died in the twenty-fifth year of Edward I. His descendant, Thomas Fitch, was knighted by Charles II, 1679, served the office of high sheriff in Kent, and was created baronet September 7, 1688."

Probably no poet's muse ever brought him more substantial returns than did that of Alfred Tennyson, though the amount which he received per annum for his literary work has been much overrated. His income from his published works was never more than six thousand pounds a year, and during the latter years of his life was much less than that. The first money which he earned by his compositions was when, at his grandfather's desire, he wrote a poem on the death of his grandmother. The old gentleman presented him a half guinea with the remark, "Here is a half guinea for you, the first you have ever earned by poetry, and take my word for it, the last."

Alfred Tennyson matriculated at Trinity College, Cambridge, February 20, 1828. There his brother, Frederick Tennyson, was already a distinguished scholar. Alfred's friends and intimates at college were Spedding, author of the life of Bacon; Milnes (Lord Houghton), Trench (afterward Archbishop of London), Alford (afterward Dean of Canterbury), Brookfield, Blakesley (afterward Dean of Lincoln), Thompson, S. S. Rice, Merivale (afterward Dean of Ely), J. M. Kemble, Heath (senior wrangler 1832), Charles Buller, Monteith, Tennant, and A. H. Hallam. Here Tennyson moved as a highly esteemed equal among the brainiest of his associates. His personal peculiarities were respected, and the development of his genius was hailed with delight. The poet says, "I kept a tame snake in my rooms. I liked to watch his wonderful sinuosities on the carpet." The following verses on "The Moon," written at this period, show that the unique Tennyson style had even then been formed:

Deep glens I found, and sunless gulfs,
  Set round with many a toppling spire,
And monstrous rocks from craggy mounts,
  Disploding globes of roaring fire.

Large as a human eye the sun
  Drew down the West his feeble lights;
And then a night, all moons, confused
  The shadows from the icy heights.

Of the society of the "Apostles," an association of kindred spirits, Tennyson was an early member. "On stated evenings," says Carlyle, "was much logic, and other spiritual fencing, and ingenuous collision—probably of a really superior quality in that kind; for not a few of the then disputants have since proved themselves men of parts, and attained distinction in the intellectual walks of life." In this society of the "Apostles" were discussed such questions as the following: "Have Shelley's poems an immoral tendency?" Tennyson votes "No." "Is an intelligible First Cause deducible from the phenomena of the universe?" Tennyson votes "No." "Is there any rule of moral action beyond general expediency?" Tennyson votes "Aye." Tennant writing to Tennyson says:

> Last Saturday we had an Apostolic dinner, when we had the honor among other things of drinking your health. Edmund Lushington and I went away tolerably early, but most of them stayed till past two. John Heath volunteered a song; Kemble got into a passion about nothing, but quickly jumped out again; Blakesley was afraid the proctor might come in; and Thompson poured large quantities of salt upon Douglas Heath's head, because he talked nonsense.

While yet in college Tennyson seems to have anticipated in effect the theory of evolution, which in later years was generally associated with the name of Charles Darwin. Tennyson says that "the development of the human body might possibly be traced from the radiated, vermicular, molluscous, and vertebrate organisms."

In 1830 the volume, *Poems, Chiefly Lyr-*

ical, was greeted with the appreciative applause of a small chorus of admiring friends. They prophesied the author's coming eminence, but the great world was indifferent. The previous year Arthur Hallam had written to W. E. Gladstone, "I consider Tennyson as promising fair to be the greatest poet of our generation." In 1831, after the death of Tennyson's father, when it appeared that the family were about to remove from Somersby, Arthur Hallam in a spirit of prophecy wrote to Emily Tennyson, to whom he had been attached for about two years:

> Many years, perhaps, or shall I say many ages, after we all have been laid in dust, young lovers of the beautiful and the true may seek in faithful pilgrimage the spot where Alfred's mind was molded in silent sympathy with the everlasting forms of nature. Legends will perhaps be attached to the places that are near it Some Mariana, it will be said, lived wretched and alone in a dreary house on the top of the opposite hill. Some Isabel may with more truth be sought nearer yet. The belfry in which the white owl sat "warming his five wits" will be shown for sixpence to such travelers as have lost their own. Critic after critic will track the wanderings of the brook, or mark groupings of elm and poplar,

in order to verify the "Ode to Memory," in its minutest particulars.

At this time Tennyson's simple and abounding gladness merely to be alive is well expressed in a certain sonnet entitled "Life."

> Why suffers human life so soon eclipse?
> For I could burst into a psalm of praise,
> Seeing the heart so wondrous in her ways,
> E'en scorn looks beautiful on human lips!
> Would I could pile fresh life on life, and dull
> The sharp desire of knowledge still with knowing!
> Art, science, nature, everything is full,
> As my own soul is full, to overflowing—
> Millions of forms, and hues, and shades, that give
> The difference of all things to the sense,
> And all the likeness in the difference.
> I thank thee, God, that thou hast made me live:
> I reck not for the sorrow or the strife:
> One only joy I know, the joy of life.

At Cambridge the "Palace of Art" was passed about in manuscript among an elect few, who admired it according to its deserts. In 1832 Tennyson gave to the world another volume of poems which, despite the high expectations of his friends, was but coldly received by the general public. The *Quarterly Review* was very savage in its onslaught upon the poet. In vain his friends endeavored to cheer him by telling him that "his very creative originality and unlikeness to any poet, his uncommon power over varied meters and rare harmonies of sound and sense, needed the creation of a taste for his work before he could be appreciated." An old Lincolnshire squire, however, expressed the estimation in which the *Quarterly* was generally held when he said to Tennyson that the *Quarterly* "was the next book to God's Bible." After the publication of the 1832 volume ten years elapsed before the poet again addressed the reading world. Tennyson was deeply discouraged. He fancied that England was an uncongenial atmosphere, and began to think of living abroad in Jersey, in the south of France, or in Italy. "He was so far persuaded that the English people would never care for his poetry that, had it not been for the intervention of friends, he declared it not unlikely that after the death of Hallam he would not have continued to write."

The last letter which Tennyson received

from his friend Hallam contained these manuscript lines:

> I do but mock me with the questionings.
> Dark, dark, irrecoverably dark
> Is the soul's eye; yet how it strives and battles
> Through the impenetrable gloom to fix
> That master light, the secret truth of things,
> Which is the body of the Infinite God.

Arthur Hallam died at Vienna, September 15, 1833. When his father returned from his usual daily walk he saw Arthur asleep, as he supposed, upon the couch. A blood vessel near the brain had suddenly burst; the young man was not asleep, but dead. The germ of that great threnody, "In Memoriam"—the one adequate and matchless elegy in any language—appears in the following fragment:

> Where is the voice I loved? ah, where
> Is that dear hand that I would press?
> Lo! the broad heavens, cold and bare,
> The stars that know not my distress!
>
> . . . . . .
>
> The vapor labors up the sky,
> Uncertain forms are darkly moved!
> Larger than human passes by
> The shadow of the man I loved,
> And clasps his hands, as one that prays!

Under the shadow of this great loss and sorrow was begun the poem entitled "The Two Voices." The poet was most exacting as to his art. It is said that "The Brook" was actually rescued from the waste-paper heap. His fine sense of proportion caused him to elide from "The Two Voices" so excellent a stanza as this:

> From when his baby pulses beat
> To when his hands in their last heat
> Pick at the death-mote in the sheet.

To adverse criticism Tennyson was sensitive in an extreme degree; not, he declared, so far as his art was concerned, but because of the petty personal spites and wretched meannesses disclosed. On the other hand, intelligent praise instantly gave him encouragement, and a favorable review from far-off Calcutta could so brace the poet's spirits as to make him warm to his work. We are told that the localities of Tennyson's subject poems are wholly imaginary. He himself says of "The Miller's Daughter," which was much altered and enlarged from the edition of 1832, "The mill was no particular mill; if I thought at all of any mill, it was that of Trumpington near Cambridge."

The grandfather desired to make parsons of all the Tennyson brothers, but only one—Charles—fulfilled this pious wish. Charles and Alfred married sisters, daughters of Henry Sellwood, Esq. Arthur Hallam, who was visiting at Somersby rectory, asked Emily Sellwood to walk with him in the Fairy Wood. At a turn of the path they came upon Alfred Tennyson, "who, at the sight of the slender, beautiful girl of seventeen in her simple gray dress, moving 'like a light across the woodland ways,' suddenly said to her, 'Are you a dryad or an oread wandering here?' " The long-dreaded separation from Somersby took place in 1837. After this the Tennysons flitted several times, first to High Beech in Epping Forest, then to Tunbridge Wells, thence to Boxley near Maidstone. In 1839 the poet wrote to Emily Sellwood, his future wife: "Perhaps I am coming to the Lincolnshire coast, but I scarcely know. The journey is so expensive and I am so poor." Again, "I shall never see the Eternal City, nor that dome, the wonder of the world; I do not think I would live there if I could, and I have no money for touring." After 1840 all correspondence between Alfred Tennyson and Emily Sellwood was forbidden, since there seemed to be no prospect of their ever being married, owing to a perpetual want of funds. The poet was forty-one years old when he at length found it possible to wed the woman of his choice. Not until that time did his poems bring him even a limited competency. His courtship was a long romance of hope, and patience, and trust. In after years he said of his bride, "The peace of God came into my life before the altar when I wedded her." She was the poet's earliest and latest critic, to whose judgment he always deferred. Their domestic life was supremely happy, and of the wife some of her friends were wont to say, "She is as great as Alfred." As an illustration of her character Jowett was told by Tennyson that his wife once said, "When I pray I see the face of God smiling upon me."

Tennyson's memory of his mother, whose portrait he has so beautifully drawn in "The Princess," and the poet's gentle and lovely wife increased, if possible, his natural chivalry toward women. Before his marriage he thus writes to Miss Sellwood: "A good woman is a wondrous creature, cleaving to the right and the good in all change, lovely in her youthful comeliness, lovely all her life long in comeliness of heart." To a friend he said, "I would pluck my hand from a man, even if he were my greatest hero, or dearest friend, if he wronged a woman, or told her a lie."

We learn that it was in the latter part of 1837, or the beginning of 1838, that Tennyson appears to have first become known in America. About that time Ralph Waldo Emerson somehow made acquaintance with the 1830 and 1832 volumes, and delighted in lending them to his friends. In November, 1850, after the death of Wordsworth, Alfred Tennyson was appointed poet-laureate. The appointment was owing chiefly to Prince Albert's admiration for

"In Memoriam." From this time onward more prosperous days began to dawn upon him. Previously, because of straitened circumstances, he had ridden in third-class railway carriages, and had complained that it was "expensive being at an inn." Six years later, upon the publication of "Maud," of which thirty thousand copies were sold immediately, he was enabled to purchase with the proceeds of the sale of that poem the beautiful home at "Farringford" in the Isle of Wight. What other poet, of this or any former century, was possessed of two such homes as "Farringford" and "Aldworth"?

Perhaps we may again advert to the senseless outcry which was raised when Tennyson accepted a place in the House of Lords. In reply to a letter from Gladstone upon the subject the poet wrote:

> I speak frankly to you when I say that I had rather we should remain plain "Mr." and "Mrs." and that, if it were possible, the title should first be assumed by our son at any age it may be thought right to fix upon; but, like enough, this is against all precedent, and could not be managed; and on no

account would I have suggested it were there the least chance of the queen's construing it into a slight of the proffered honor. I hope that I have too much of the old-world loyalty left in me not to wear my lady's favors against all comers, should you think that it would be more agreeable to her majesty that I should do so.

It was with reluctance that Tennyson finally accepted a barony, after a baronetcy had been three times previously urged upon him. He makes his own position sufficiently clear in the following lines to a friend:

Why should I be selfish and not suffer an honor—as Gladstone says—to be done to literature in my name? For myself I felt, especially in the dark days that may be coming on, that a peerage might possibly be more of a disadvantage than an advantage to my sons; I cannot tell. I have been worried because, being of a nervous, sensitive nature, I wished as soon as possible to get over the disagreeable results, and the newspaper comments and abuse.

Tennyson's political utterances are among the wisest of his time. He was deeply interested in the politics of the world, particularly whatever affected his own country. Speaking of England and Ireland, he said:

The Celtic race does not easily amalgamate with other races, as those of Scandinavian origin do, as for instance Saxon and Norman, which have fused perfectly. The Teuton has no poetry in his nature like the Celt, and this makes the Celt much more dangerous in politics, for he yields more to his imagination than his common sense. Yet his imagination does not allow of his realizing the sufferings of poor dumb beasts. The Irish are difficult for us to deal with. For one thing the English do not understand their innate love of fighting, words and blows. If on either side of an Irishman's road to paradise shillalahs grew, which automatically hit him on the head, yet he would not be satisfied. Suppose that we allowed Ireland to separate from us; owing to its factions she would soon fall a prey to some foreign power. She has absolute freedom now, and a more than full share in the government of one of the mightiest empires in the world. Whatever she may say, she is not only feudal, but oriental, and loves those in authority over her to have the iron hand in the silken glove. Let the demagogues remember, "Liberty forgetful of others is license, and nothing better than treason." . . . It was the mob who smashed the Duke of Wellington's windows on the anniversary of Waterloo. As Goethe says, "The worst thing in the world is ignorance in motion."

He thus writes to Walt Whitman regarding the American Constitution:

The coming year should give new life to every American who has breathed a breath of that soul which inspired the great founders of the American Constitution, whose work you are to celebrate.

> Truly, the mother country, pondering on this, may feel that how much soever the daughter owes to her she, the mother, has nevertheless something to learn from the daughter. Especially I would note the care taken to guard a noble Constitution from rash and unwise innovators. . . . Every agitator should be made to prove his means of livelihood.

Once more:

> We ought not to show our arsenals and dockyards to the world, as we do. Want of confidence is hateful among members of a family, but want of confidence is necessary among nations.

The earliest memorandum for the King Arthur epics is extremely interesting. In it the poet says: "Two Guineveres. Y^{e} first prim. Christianity. 2^{d} Roman Catholicism. Y^{e} first is put away and dwells apart. 2^{d} Guinevere flies. Arthur takes to the first again, but finds her changed by lapse of time." For thirty years Tennyson meditated the Arthurian poems. Like Milton before him, he had early been impressed by the legend of King Arthur, and intended to weave it into a new form. In view of the various interpretations which have been put upon the "Idylls of the King" the poet's own explanation of them is of value. "The whole," he said, "is the dream of man coming into practical life and ruined by one sin. Birth is a mystery and death is a mystery, and in the midst lies the table-land of life and its struggles and performances. It is not the history of one man or of one government, but of a whole cycle of generations."

Alfred Tennyson was always reverent toward revealed religion and respectful toward its ministers. He said of the Bible that it "ought to be read, were it only for the sake of the grand English in which it is written, an education in itself." Once in a serious illness he said of the Book of Job that he thought it "one of the greatest of books," and asked to have read to him the "little children, love one another" passage from St. John, and also the Sermon on the Mount, for which he possessed a measureless admiration. His attitude toward Christ was that of an old saint or mystic. It was his opinion that "The Son of Man" was "the most tremendous title possible;" and that the "most pathetic utterance in all history was that of Christ on the cross, 'It is finished,' after that passionate cry, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'" Said he, "Indeed, what matters it how much man knows and does, if he keeps not a reverential looking upward? He is only the subtlest beast in the field." It was thus he regarded prayer: "Prayer is, to take a mundane simile, like opening a sluice between the great ocean and our little channels when the great sea gathers itself together and flows in at full tide. . . . Prayer on our part is the highest aspiration of the soul." He discoursed much with his friends on religious questions, and of Christianity observed, "It is tugging at my heart." He further said:

> Almost the finest summing up of religion is to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God. . . . Take away the sense of individual responsibility, and men sink into pessimism and madness. . . . Man's free will is but a bird in the cage; he can stop at the lower perch, or he can mount to a higher. Then that which is and knows will enlarge his cage, give him a higher and higher perch, and at last break off the top of his cage, and let him out to be one with the free will of the universe. . . . It is motive,

it is the great purpose, which consecrates life. The real test of a man is not what he knows, but what he is in himself and in his relation to others. For instance, can he battle against his own bad inherited instincts, or brave public opinion in the cause of truth? The love of God is the true basis of duty, truth, reverence, loyalty, love, virtue, and work. I believe in these, although I feel the emptiness and hollowness of much of life. "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." . . . Evil must come upon us headlong, if morality tries to get on without religion. . . . Beware of breaking up the soil of any faith when you have no better seed to sow. . . . I dread the losing hold of forms. I have expressed this in my "Akbar." There must be forms, yet I hate the need for so many sects and separate services.

His faith in a divine Personality was absolute, as many rememberable utterances testify:

I should infinitely rather feel myself the most miserable wretch on the face of the earth with a God above than the highest type of a man standing alone. . . . The soul seems to me one with God. I can sympathize with God in my poor little way. . . . It is hard to believe in God; but it is harder not to believe. I believe in God, not from what I see in nature, but from what I find in man. . . . Love is the highest we feel, therefore we must believe that "God is love." We cannot but believe that the creation is infinite, if God is infinite. . . . I believe that God reveals himself in every individual soul; and my idea of heaven is perpetual ministry of one soul to another.

In April, 1886, the poet was called upon to enter the deep waters of an overwhelming sorrow in the death of his son Lionel, who passed away on shipboard as he was returning from India, and was buried in the Red Sea. It is written of this son that from his "earliest childhood his had always been an affectionate and beautiful nature." The faith which the laureate had so long cherished in the immortality of the soul now afforded him supreme solace. His utterances touching this great subject are as trenchant as they are wise. He came much into contact with the agnosticism of the day, but never for a moment loosed his grasp of the eternal hope. He declared the after-life to be the cardinal part of Christ's teaching. When Tyndall once said to him, "God and spirit I know, and matter I know; and I believe in both," remarking further, "we may all be absorbed into the Godhead," Tennyson replied, "Suppose that he is the real person, and we are only relatively personal." He was interested to learn that Tyndall was convinced that life could not originate without life. In a manuscript note upon his poem "Vastness" he has recorded the following: "What matters anything in this world without full faith in the immortality of the soul and of love?" In a letter to the queen he writes: "As to the sufferings of this momentary life, we can but trust that in some after state, when we see clearer, we shall thank the Supreme Power for having made us, through these, higher and greater beings." A lady whose friend he had been from her childhood he thus consoles upon the loss of her son:

> The son whom you so loved is not really what we call dead, but more actually living than when alive here. You cannot catch the voice, or feel the hands, or kiss the cheeks, that is all; a separation for an hour, not an eternal farewell. If it were not so that which made us would seem too cruel a power to be worshiped, and could not be loved.

He addresses the following words to Lord Houghton on the death of the latter's wife: "I may say that I think I can see, as far as anyone can see in this twilight, that the nobler nature does not pass from its individuality when it passes out of this one life."

As a dramatic writer Tennyson will be esteemed more highly with the lapse of time. When his plays first appeared almost without exception they were decried by all except a few special friends. The "general," to whom "Harold," "May," and "Becket" were "caviare," seemed to resent his putting aside his character as a lyric and epic poet to become a dramatist. Yet his dramas were admired by such rare judges of literary excellence as James Spedding, George H. Lewes, and George Eliot. Tennyson knew when his work was good and was willing that it should wait for the ratification of time. Said he: "Thank God, the time is past for the press to make or mar a poem, play, or artist. Few original things are well received at first. People must grow accustomed to what is out of the common before adopting it." From bitter moods of despondency the poet was preserved by a quiet and sometimes grim sense of humor and of the dramatic aspect of things. He used to tell with delight of Aubrey de Vere's view of eternal punishment: "Of course it will be listening to Huxley and Tyndall disputing eternally on the nonexistence of God."

Throughout his life the laureate was an idealist of the noblest type. He dwelt habitually in the region of rare and beautiful fancies, yet his outlook upon life was ever sane and just. He never for a moment failed to discern the unity of the highest art and the highest morality. Said he:

> "I agree with Wordsworth that art is selection. Look at Zola, for instance: he shows the evils of the world without the ideal. His art becomes monstrous therefore, because he does not practice selection. In the noblest genius there is need of self-restraint." "The moral higher imagination enslaved to sense is like an eagle caught by the feet in a snare, baited with carrion, so that it cannot use its wings to soar."

His final views concerning woman and her relation to the world did not differ from those so luminously set forth in "The Princess." One of his latest dicta was:

"Especially do I want people to recognize that the women of our western hemisphere represent the highest type of women, greatly owing to the respect and honor paid to them by men, but that the moment the honor and respect are diminished the high type of woman will vanish." That the loftiest inspirations belong to the ideal world he declared when he said, "Poetry is truer than fact." We are told that with passionate earnestness he once spoke: "Yes, it is true that there are moments when the flesh is nothing to me, when I feel and know the flesh to be the vision, God and the spiritual the only real and true. Depend upon it, the spiritual is the real; it belongs to one more than the hand and the foot."

Tennyson was an incessant reader in all directions — travels, astronomy, natural science, philosophy, and theology. His literary taste was of a most catholic nature. He kept abreast of the literary development of his time, and read Stevenson, George Meredith, Walter Besant, Black, Hardy, Henry James, Marion Crawford, Anstey, Barrie, Blackmore, Conan Doyle, Miss Braddon, Miss Lawless, Ouida, Miss Broughton, Lady Margaret Majendie, Edna Lyall, Mrs. Oliphant, Hall Caine, and J. H. Shorthouse. His observations concerning men and books were as trenchant as they were true:

> "Keats is not a master of blank verse." He "promised securely more than any other English poet since Milton." "Byron's merits are on the surface. This is not the case with Wordsworth. You must love Wordsworth ere he will seem worthy of your love." "Browning never greatly cares about the glory of words or beauty of form. . . . He has plenty of music in him, but he cannot get it out."

Of George Eliot's novels he liked best *Adam Bede, Scenes of Clerical Life,* and *Silas Marner. Romola* he thought somewhat out of her depth.

Alfred Tennyson was characterized by the utmost simplicity of life. He loved Nature in her every mood, and she took him to her inmost heart. It is recorded of him that "throughout the winter he fed the thrushes and other birds as usual out of his window." Nor was he a recluse, but on the contrary an extremely hospitable man.

He generally urged a parting guest's return with the words, "Come whenever you like." Though relentlessly pursued by curiosity hunters, and apparently sometimes abrupt and brusque, he was really a patient and tolerant man. One day an American suddenly appeared at Aldworth, saying that he had worked his way across the Atlantic in a cattle ship in order to recite "Maud" to the author thereof. The poet pitied the man, listened to the recitation, and paid the reciter's passage back to America.

Tennyson was an artificer in words. The glory and the value of language afforded him perpetual satisfaction. It was his custom to express in a line or two awe-inspiring and beautiful phases of natural phenomena; these lines were written down in notebooks and afterward duly and fiittingly incorporated in poems now familiar to the world. It has been well said that "The Talking Oak" is an example of Tennyson's unusual power of humanizing external nature and of investing it with the feelings and attributes of human kind. It is interesting to know, on the authority of the laureate himself, that the lines,

> I held it truth with him who sings
> To one clear harp in divers tones,

have reference to Goethe, for whom Tennyson entertained an abiding admiration.

Though the poet was excessively shy in the presence of strangers, when the strangeness had worn away his companionship was delightful. One of his friends speaks of his "gay, boyish humor, the sunny sweetness, the delight in life that never failed." Jowett says:

> His repertory of stories was perfectly inexhaustible; they were often about slight matters that would scarcely bear repetition, but were told with such life-like reality that they convulsed his hearers with laughter. Like most story-tellers, he often repeated his favorites; but, like children, his audience liked hearing them again and again, and he enjoyed telling them. It might be said of him that he told more stories than anyone, but was by no means the regular story-teller. In the commonest conversation he showed himself a man of genius.

Tennyson's conversation was of so rich and varied a kind and the choiceness of his language was such that Fitzgerald once declared, "I wish I had been A. T.'s Boswell." In his domestic life the poet was happy beyond measure. He greeted his friends within the portals of his home with a cordiality and unaffected courtesy possible only to a great nature. There, upon request, to rapt listeners he would read his poems in that full organ-voice of which Carlyle once remarked, "It is like the sound of a pinewood." Edmund Lushington also speaks of "the deep melodious thunder" of the laureate's voice. His reading of "Guinevere" once made George Eliot weep. Tennyson's heart was ever tender and kind, and moved by the most precious instincts of the race. Of vivisection he said:

> Without anæsthetics no animal should be cut open for the sake of science. I have been reading of the horrible and brutal experiments in Italy and France, and my whole heart goes out to a certain writer in the *Spectator,* who declared he had yet to find out mankind was worth the cruel torture of a single dumb animal.

He writes to Mary Howitt concerning the household affections: "I wish that we Englanders dealt more in such symbols, that we dressed our affections up in a little more poetical costume; real warmth of heart would lose nothing, rather gain by it. As it is, our manners are as cold as the walls of our churches."

Lord Tennyson was a man of wide learning. He was familiar with the Greek, Latin, Hebrew, German, and Italian languages, and had some acquaintance with the Persian. He was young in heart to the very last, as all great genius has ever been. One of his favorite sayings was, "Make the lives of children as beautiful and as happy as possible." His was an ingenuous and confiding nature, unworldly in the sense that in thought he abode in pure regions above the sordid things of life. At least one of his friends has said that his entire trustfulness was sometimes almost pathetic. His personal appearance was such as to command attention wherever he might be. The following is Carlyle's portrait of the poet:

> Some weeks ago, one night, the poet Tennyson and Matthew Allen were discovered here smoking in the

> garden. Tennyson had been here before, but was still new to Jane, who was alone for the first hour or two of it. A fine, large-featured, dim-eyed, bronze-colored, shaggy-headed man is Alfred; dusty, smoky, free and easy; who swims outwardly and inwardly, with great composure in an articulate element as of tranquil chaos and tobacco smoke; great now and then when he does emerge; a most restful, brotherly, solid-hearted man.

Mrs. Carlyle's portrait of the poet is equally vivid and characteristic:

> Get his [Tennyson's] poems if you can, and read the "Ulysses," "Dora," the "Vision of Sin," and you will find that we do not overrate him. Besides, he is a very handsome man, and a noble-hearted one, with something of the gypsy in his appearance, which for me is perfectly charming. Babbie never saw him, unfortunately, or perhaps I should say fortunately, for she must have fallen in love with him on the spot, unless she be made absolutely of ice; and then men of genius have never anything to keep wives upon.

A delineation by still another hand affords us an additional impression of the poet's uniqueness and individuality:

> I saw a tall, large figure, cloak and large black wide-awake. He had no beard or mustache. I recollect being impressed with the beauty and power

of his mouth and chin. His face is full of power and thought; a deep furrow runs from nose to chin on either side, and gives a peculiar expression to the face; a lofty forehead adds to this. I remember the splendor of his eyes.

A great personality is always, in an appreciable degree, an accurate embodiment of the age in which he lives. Thus Tennyson gave voice to the unrest, the forebodings, the conquests, the questionings, and the aspirations of this transitional century. Though he heard "the sullen Lethe rolling doom" on all things here, the world will not permit his name to perish while manhood, faith, and duty, and the love of the good, the beautiful, and the true, are cherished among our kind. As Froude has said, the world will not soon see such another, for the modern unquiet, impatient *zeitgeist* is against the production of any such great meditative spirit. In the Pantheon of England's glory and renown, "where the huge minster's shadowy arches soar," there rests no more sacred dust than that of Alfred Tennyson.

II

WILLIAM MORRIS—POET, SOCIALIST, AND MASTER OF MANY CRAFTS

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Could that blithe old singer of the "breathing morn," from his pleasant "lodge within a park," come stepping briskly along our noisy nineteenth-century ways, bringing with him the scent of English fields, and notes of mavis and of merle—could Geoffrey Chaucer with ruddy cheeks, kindly eyes, and pointed beard, his flowing locks surmounted by a sheepskin cap, appear suddenly to our weary eyes with all the buoyancy of his own fresh day—even outwardly he might not differ greatly from that virile and sturdy figure which, to the present generation, has been known as William Morris. As story-tellers Geoffrey Chaucer and William Morris are akin. Ancient Woodstock and modern Kelmscott meet where these minstrels chant. Although in art Chaucer and Morris are closely related, in the products of their pens they are notably dissimilar.

William Morris was of Welsh extraction. He was the eldest son of his parents, and was born in the village of Walthamstow, Essex, on March 24, 1834. He himself says in *News from Nowhere:* "I was born and bred on the edge of Epping Forest, Walthamstow and Woodford, to wit. . . . A pretty place, too, a very jolly place, now that the trees have had time to grow again since the great clearing of houses in 1855." In the same work he speaks of the lovely river Lee, "where old Izaak Walton used to fish about the places called Stratford and Old Ford." In a letter to *The Daily Chronicle* he says of Epping Forest: "When I was a boy and young man I knew it yard by yard from Wanstead to the Theydons, and from Hale End to Fairlop Oak. In those days it had no worse foes than the gravel stealer and the robbing fence-maker, and was always interesting and often very beautiful."

Morris's artistic sense developed early.

It is recorded that as a boy of nine years, with a pony of his own, he rode half Essex over in search of old churches. So deep an impression did the results of these researches make upon his mind that, after an interval of many years, he could remember the details of a building which he had not seen since his boyhood. It was from Sir Walter Scott that Morris imbibed his first taste for art and romance. At the early age of seven he had read nearly, if not quite, all of Scott's works; and it was the "Wizard of the North" who taught him the love of Gothic architecture. He says:

> How well I remember as a boy my first acquaintance with a room hung with faded greenery at Queen Elizabeth's Lodge, by Chingford Hatch, in Epping Forest, and the impression of romance it made upon me! A feeling that always comes back to me when I read, as I often do, Sir Walter Scott's *Antiquary,* and come to the description of the green room at Monkbarns, amongst which the novelist has with such exquisite cunning of art imbedded the fresh and glittering verses of the summer poet Chaucer.

Morris was educated at Marlborough under clerical masters, against whom, he remarks, he naturally rebelled. The loose discipline of the place allowed him full scope for the cultivation of his individual tastes and pursuits. He was not more than fourteen years of age when the first general appearance took place, before the public, of the Preraphaelites, the radical doctrine of whom was naturalism as distinguished from realism. But the time was not yet ripe for Morris to come under their influence, nor was he ever formally enrolled in their ranks. Says Aymer Vallance:

> It is, therefore, a supreme achievement of William Morris to have brought art, through the medium of the handicrafts, within reach of thousands who could never hope to obtain but a transitory view of Preraphaelite pictures; his distinction, by decorating the less pretending, but not less necessary, articles of household furnishing, to have done more than any other man in the present century to beautify the plain, everyday home life of the people.

On the second of June, 1852, Morris matriculated at Exeter College, Oxford. This was an event of first-rate importance in his life. Edward Burne-Jones matriculated on the same day at the same college.

The two freshmen were drawn together by ties of sympathy and friendship that remained unbroken until the day of Morris's death. At this time Morris began to be conscious of the poise and strength of his own life, and to become intensely interested in the origin and characteristics of mediæval art. Now, also, began to grow up within his soul that uncompromising protest against the vulgar and tasteless commercialism ruling the present century. He thus expresses himself:

> It is a grievous thing to have to say, but say it I must, that the one most beautiful city in England, the city of Oxford, has been ravaged for many years past, not only by ignorant tradesmen, but by the university and college authorities. Those whose special business it is to direct the culture of the nation have treated the beauty of Oxford as if it were a matter of no moment, as if their commercial interests might thrust it aside without consideration.

While still an undergraduate at Oxford he "first saw the city of Rouen, then still in its outward aspect a piece of the Middle Ages: no words can tell you how its mingled beauty, history, and romance took hold on me." And he further adds: "I can only say that, looking back on my past life, I find it was the greatest pleasure I have ever had; and now it is a pleasure which no one can ever have again; it is lost to the world forever;" that is, because of the injurious and ignorant restoration. Morris had come to Oxford with a warm admiration for the writings of Mrs. Browning. While in college he became acquainted, not only with the works of Browning and Tennyson, but also with certain older writers, with the *Chronicles* of Froissart, and with a book destined to exercise a far-reaching influence upon him and his circle, the *Morte d' Arthur* of Sir Thomas Malory. About the time of Christmas, 1855, Burne-Jones relinquished his intention of entering the ministry, and proceeded to find Rossetti in London with the purpose of becoming his pupil. Ere long he presented his friend Morris to his chosen master, whom he then regarded as the greatest man in Europe. Without waiting to take his degree Burne-Jones began at once the systematic study and practice of painting. Morris, on the contrary, preferred to complete his university course, which he did, taking his degree of B.A. in 1856.

The first step in William Morris's artistic career was when he articled himself to George Edmund Street, then located in the university town as an architect to the diocese of Oxford. As fundamental to all art he elected an architect's training. He says of this pursuit:

> I have spoken of the popular arts, but they might all be summed up in that one word "architecture;" they are all parts of that great whole, and the art of house-building begins it all. If we did not know how to dye or to weave; if we had neither gold, nor silver, nor silk, and no pigments to paint with, but half a dozen ochers and umbers, we might yet frame a worthy art that would lead to everything, if we had but timber, stone, and lime, and a few cunning tools to make these common things not only shelter us from wind and weather, but also express the thoughts and aspirations that stir in us. Architecture would lead us to all the arts, as it did with earlier men; but if we despise it and take no note of how we are housed, the other arts will have a hard time of it indeed.

Morris was possessed of a remarkable faculty of concentration, being able to wreak his whole soul without distraction upon the subject in hand, so that he mastered easily and quickly the things learned by others with difficulty or not at all. In 1856 Mr. Morris settled in lodgings with his friend Burne-Jones, at 17 Red Lion Square, where they shared a studio in common. In this same year appeared *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, which continued exactly twelve months. Among such contributors as Vernon Lushington, Jex-Blake, Burne-Jones, and D. G. Rossetti, Morris was not the least figure, being, indeed, the largest contributor, and causing his friends to prophesy for him a brilliant future in the world of letters. Rossetti introduced Morris to Ruskin and other noted artists and literary men. Early in 1857 Rossetti thus writes to Bell Scott:

> Two young men, projectors of *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine,* have recently come to town from Oxford, and are now very intimate friends of mine. Their names are Morris and Jones. They have turned artists, instead of taking up any other career to which the university generally leads, and

both are men of real genius. Jones's designs are marvels of finish and imaginative detail, unequaled by anything unless, perhaps, Albert Durer's finest works; and Morris, though without practice as yet, has no less power, I fancy. He has written some really wonderful poetry, too.

In 1858 Morris published his first volume of poems, *The Defense of Guinevere.* It was a remarkable work for a young man twenty-four years of age. At that time Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* had not yet appeared; nor had the published poems of Rossetti been other than a few occasional pieces contributed to periodicals. Mr. Arthur Symons writes thus of Morris's *Defense of Guinevere:* "His first book—which invented a new movement, doing easily, with a certain appropriate quaintness, what Tennyson all his life had been trying to do—has all the exquisite trouble of his first awakening to the love of romance."

Burne-Jones delighted to portray upon canvas the identical subjects which Morris chose for his poems; these breathe a mediæval atmosphere, and are full of archaisms and quaintnesses which might easily have declined into mannerisms and as easily lent themselves to parody. To illustrate:

Across the empty garden beds,
  When the Sword went out to sea,
I scarcely saw my sisters' heads
  Bowed each beside a tree.
I could not see the castle leads,
  When the Sword went out to sea.

. . . . .

O, russet brown and scarlet bright,
  When the Sword went out to sea,
My sisters wore; I wore but white:
  Red, brown, and white, are three;
Three damozels; each had a knight
  When the Sword went out to sea.

. . . . .

A golden gilliflower to-day
I wore upon my helm away,
And won the prize of this tourney.
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflee.

. . . . .

No one goes there now:
  For what is left to fetch away
From the desolate battlements all arow,
  And the lead roof heavy and gray?
"Therefore," said fair Yoland of the flowers,
"This is the tune of Seven Towers."

. . . . .

There was a lady lived in a hall,
Large in the eyes, and slim and tall;
  And ever she sung from noon to noon,
  Two red roses across the moon.

Yet *The Defense of Guinevere* was a notable production, and lovers of true poetry found in this volume much to impress and delight them. Anent the poems contained in this first venture Algernon Charles Swinburne says:

> The figures here given have the blood and breath, the shape and step, of life; they can move and suffer; their repentance is as real as their desire; their shame lies as deep as their love. They are at once remorseful for their sin and regretful of the pleasure that is past. The retrospective vision of Lancelot and Guinevere is as passionate and profound as life. . . . Such verses are not forgettable. They are not, indeed—as the *Idylls of the King*—the work of a dextrous craftsman in full practice. Little beyond dexterity, a rare eloquence, and a laborious patience of hand has been given to the one or denied to the other. These are good gifts and great; but it is better to want clothes than limbs.

Despite this favorable judgment it is said that the general reception of his first work was so discouraging to the young author that he had little heart to continue writing, and so turned his hand to other and more grateful occupations. Not until repeated volumes had attracted public favor did a demand arise for Morris's earliest volume, and it then had to be reprinted, the stock of "the original impression having been returned to the paper mill."

In the autumn of 1857, during a temporary residence at Oxford, William Morris was introduced to the lady who afterward became his wife. She it was whose features Dante Gabriel Rossetti delighted to portray upon canvas, and whom the artist has immortalized in numerous drawings and paintings. The marriage rendered it necessary that Morris should provide a suitable home for the young bride, and so was begun the erection of the "Red House," a structure after the bridegroom's own design, and which was mainly responsible for the revival of that style of architecture termed "Queen Anne." The firm of "Morris & Co., Decorators," is closely connected with the development of artistic house furnishings and decorations during the past twenty years and more in England. In the furnishing of the "Red House," at Bexley Heath, Morris had exercised his ingenuity in embroidery design, in ceiling and mural ornamentation, and in numerous other ways had become possessed of practical experience in various branches of domestic art. It is recorded that neither "love nor money could procure beautiful objects of contemporary manufacture for any purpose of household furnishing or adornment when William Morris undertook the herculean and seemingly hopeless task of decorative reform and wrought and brought deliverance from the thraldom of the ugly, which oppressed all the so-called arts" of this century. That branch of the ceramic art which is represented by the decoration of tiles owes its rescue from vulgarity and degradation to William Morris. "All nations, however barbarous," said he in his lecture on "The Lesser Arts of Life," "have made pottery; but none have ever failed to make it on true principles, none have ever made shapes ugly or base till quite modern times. . . . As to the surface decoration on pottery, it is clear it must never be printed." When, at the beginning of 1862, tiles were required for the "Red House," there were no hand-painted tiles in England, so Morris found it necessary to begin at the foundation. Plain white tiles were imported from Holland, and after various experiments with glazes and enamels the desired results were obtained.

Of the many industries related to the skill of William Morris none has wider celebrity than that of wall paper hangings. It was he who lifted this branch of domestic ornamentation above the level of a mere crude expedient into a sphere of genuine art. His wall paper designs were models of beauty and simplicity, and in this particular field he was little short of a creator. Two or three years after the establishment of the firm of "Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co." Morris conceived the purpose of adding weaving to their other enterprises. Concerning this art Morris says:

> As the designing of woven stuffs fell into degradation in the latter days, the designers got fidgeting after trivial novelties—change for the sake of change; they must needs strive to make their woven flowers look as if they were painted with a brush,

> or even sometimes as if they were drawn by the engraver's burin. This gave them plenty of trouble and exercised their ingenuity in the tormenting of their web with spots and stripes and ribs and the rest of it, but quite destroyed the seriousness of the work and even its *raison d'être.*

It is averred that the attention of Morris was drawn to the industry of weaving by observing a man in the street selling toy models of weaving machines, when it occurred to him to purchase one and practice upon it for himself. After a series of experiments he endeavored to secure a full-size old-style hand loom, with hand shuttle, but it was not until well on toward the eighties that a Jacquard loom was erected in Ormond Yard, when Morris was enabled systematically to carry on weaving as a part of the work of his firm.

About 1875 Morris happened to need some special shades of silk for embroidery. Unable to procure what he desired, he determined to undertake dyeing on his own account. Morris began by dyeing skeins of silk for embroidery, and then proceeded to dye wool for tapestry and carpets. Morris was strongly of the opinion that certain results effected by chemical sicence had proved extremely injurious to the art of dyeing. He says:

> No change at all befell the art either in the East or the North till after the discovery of America; this gave the dyers one new material in itself good, and one that was doubtful or bad. The good one was the new insect dye, cochineal, which at first was used only for dyeing crimson. . . . The bad new material was logwood, so fugitive a dye as to be quite worthless as a color by itself (as it was first used) and to my mind of very little use otherwise. No other new dyestuff of importance was found in America, although the discoverers came across such abundance of red-dyeing wood growing there that a huge country of South America has thence taken its name of "Brazil."

Among the domestic arts taken up by this versatile man were printing on textile fabrics, embroidery, dyeing, carpet and arras weaving, glass painting, and cabinet making.

After the volume, *Defense of Guinevere,* the poems of Morris dealt no more with the Arthurian legends. This first book was followed by *The Life and Death of Jason,* one of the longest narrative poems in the language. The plot of the story differs little from the classical one, though the setting and elaboration are the poet's own. "It was all more or less exquisite," says Mr. Saintsbury, "it was all more or less novel." Here we come upon such rememberable lines as

Dusk grows the world, and day is weary-faced.

. . . . . .

The slim-leaved, thorny pomegranate
That flung its unstrung rubies on the grass.

. . . . . .

Darksome night is well-nigh done,
And earth is waiting silent for the sun.

. . . . . .

And so began short love and long decay,
Sorrow that bides, and joy that fleets away.

. . . . . .

And one hour
Ripened the deadly fruit of that fell flower.

Concerning this book Swinburne says, "In all the noble roll of our poets there has been since Chaucer no second teller of tales, no second rhapsode comparable to the first, till the advent of this one." And he adds to this word of eulogy: "No higher school has brought forth rarer poets than this. . . .

Here is a poem sown of itself, sprung from no alien seed, cut after no alien model, fresh as wind, bright as light, full of the spring and the sun."

Ten years intervened between the appearance of *The Defense of Guinevere* and the first part of *The Earthly Paradise.* The latter work reveals a complete departure from his earlier manner and methods. It is one of the richest and sweetest productions in any language. It is a recital of old legends and traditions from many sources, but all so molded and interfused with the poet's own genius and personality as to render them in all essential respects quite original. The prevailing tone of the work is one of gentle sadness at the omnipresence and inevitability of death, but there is nowhere anything weak or maundering. The amazing fecundity of the poet is well illustrated by presenting the bare titles of the tales contained in *The Earthly Paradise.* They are as follows: "Atalanta's Race," "The Man Born to be King," "The Doom of King Acrisius," "The Proud King," "The Story of Cupid and Psyche," "The Writing on the Image," "The Love of Alcestis," "The Lady of the Land," "The Son of Crœsus," "The Watching of the Falcon," "Pygmalion and the Image," "Ogier the Dane," "The Death of Paris," "The Land East of the Sun and West of the Moon," "The Story of Accontius and Cydippe," "The Man Who Never Laughed Again," "The Story of Rhodope," "The Lovers of Gudrun," "The Golden Apples," "The Fostering of Aslaug," "Bellerophon at Argos," "The Ring Given to Venus," "Bellerophon in Lycia," "The Hill of Venus." It is almost impossible to adequately represent the work of Morris by any selections from these tales, so interwoven with the context are his most beautiful lines. However, here is a song under the title month "July:"

Fair was the morn to-day, the blossom's scent
Floated across the fresh grass, and the bees
With low vexed song from rose to lily went,
A gentle wind was in the heavy trees,
And thine eyes shone with joyous memories;
Fair was the early morn, and fair wert thou,
And I was happy—Ah, be happy now!

Peace and content without us, love within,
That hour there was, now thunder and wild rain
Have wrapped the cowering world, and foolish sin
And nameless pride have made us wise in vain;
Ah, love! although the morn shall come again,
And on new rosebuds the new sun shall smile,
Can we regain what we have lost meanwhile?

E'en now the west grows clear of storm and threat,
But midst the lightning did the fair sun die—
Ah! he shall rise again for ages yet,
He cannot waste his life—but thou and I—
Who knows if next morn this felicity
My lips may feel, or if thou still shalt live
This seal of love renewed once more to give?

The poet's skill in portraying scenes of nature is well indicated by these lines from "Pygmalion and the Image:"

Fair was the day, the honeyed beanfield's scent
The west wind bore unto him; o'er the way
The glittering noisy poplar leaves did play.

All things were moving; as his hurried feet
Passed by, within the flowery swath he heard
The sweeping of the scythe, the swallow fleet
Rose over him, the sitting partridge stirred
On the field's edge; the brown bee by him whirred,
Or murmured in the clover flowers below,
But he with bowed-down head failed not to go.

Mr. John Morley has written thus of the poetical art of William Morris:

Mr. Morris's central quality is a vigorous and healthy objectivity; people who talk conventional cant talk about word-painting should turn to a page of *Jason* or *The Earthly Paradise* and watch how the most delicious pictures are produced by the simplest and directest means. Mr. Morris's descriptions, condensed, simple, absolutely free from all that is strained and all that is artificial, enter the reader's mind with the direct and vivid force of impressions coming straight from the painter's canvas. There is no English poet of this time, nor perhaps of any other, who has possessed this excellent gift of looking freshly and simply on eternal nature in all her many colors, and of reproducing what he sees with such effective precision and truthfulness.

The following lines from "Love is Enough" emphasize at least a part of what Mr. Morley has so finely said:

And what do ye say then? that spring long departed
Has brought forth no child to the softness and showers;
That we slept and we dreamed through the summer of flowers;
We dreamed of the winter, and waking dead-hearted
Found winter upon us and waste of dull hours.

In the year 1871 William Morris and D. G. Rossetti entered into the joint occupation of Kelmscott Manor, a name which for five and twenty years thereafter was associated with some of Morris's most remarkable work. Prior to this time Morris had become an enthusiastic student of Icelandic literature, his studies in this field resulting in the translation of *The Saga of Gunnlaug the Worm-tongue and Rafn the Skáld,* a volume entitled *The Story of Grettir the Strong,* and the *Völsung Saga.* Of this latter work Buxton Forman says: "Here the reader will find sentiment enough and romance enough—flashes of a weird magnificence that all the hills of the Land of Ice have not been able to overreach with their long dusk shadows, and that all the 'cold gray sea' that rings the Island of Thule has not washed free of its color and heat." "The Story of Frithiof the Bold," "The Story of Viglund the Fair," "The Tale of Hogni and Hedinn," "The Tale of Roi the Fool," "The Tale of Thorstein Staffsmitten," "The Story of Howard the Halt," "The Story of the Banded Men," "The Story of Hen Thorir," "The Story of the Ere Dwellers," and "The Story of the Heath Slayings" followed. That many of these works were in collaboration with Mr. Eirikr Magnússon does not detract from the immense industry and fertility of Morris. His translations, *The Aeneid of Virgil* and *The Odyssey of Homer,* must also be regarded as triumphs of literary workmanship.

In 1877 Morris published his colossal work, *The Story of Sigurd the Volsung, and the Fall of the Niblungs.* This extended poem is written in anapestic rhyming couplets. The following quotation will convey but a slight impression of this noble and splendid poem:

All hail, O Day and thy Sons, and thy kin of the colored things!
Hail, following Night and thy Daughter that leadeth thy wavering wings!
Look down with unangry eyes on us to-day alive,
And give us the hearts victorious, and the gain for which we strive!
All hail, ye lords of God-home, and Queens of the House of Gold!
Hail, thou dear earth that bearest, and thou Wealth of field and fold!
Give us, your noble children, the glory of wisdom and speech,
And the hearts and the hands of healing, and the mouths and the hands that teach!

In 1891 appeared *Poems by the Way,* a collection of the poet's fugitive verse. During the last eight years of his life, that is, from 1888 to 1896, Morris produced little poetry. But during this interval he was intensely alive to the world of humankind and to the great questions which are everywhere clamoring for solution. He seemed to feel that there could be nothing in common between modern social conditions and the spirit of poesy.

Morris's revolt against so much that is unlovely and grossly utilitarian in our present "unexampled progress" is revealed in the following lines from *The Earthly Paradise:*

> Forget six counties overhung with smoke,
> Forget the snorting steam and piston stroke,
> Forget the spreading of the hideous town;
> Think rather of the pack-horse on the down,
> And dream of London, small, and white, and clean,
> The clear Thames bordered by its gardens green.

The root of Morris's socialism is to be found in the "terrible contrast presented by the life of the workmen of the past and the life of the workmen of to-day;" hence "the more profound grew his sense of dissatisfaction with the present conditions of society." His yearning for the better time was thus expressed:

> Ah! good and ill,
> When will your strife the fated measure fill?
> When will the tangled veil be drawn away
> To show us all that unimagined day?

The poet was constantly moved by his overmastering devotion to art and his clear perception that, if labor and art are again to go hand in hand, man must love his labor; he saw, further, that in the midst of modern social conditions man will not and cannot love his work. The distinct proposition which Morris formulated was this: "It is right and necessary that all men should have work to do which shall be worth doing, and be of itself pleasant to do, and which should be done under such conditions as would make it neither overwearisome nor overanxious." He says again:

> What I mean by socialism is a condition of society in which there should be neither rich nor poor,

neither master nor master's man, neither idle nor overworked, neither brain-sick brain workers nor heart-sick hand workers—in a word, in which all men would be living in equality of condition, and would manage their affairs unwastefully, and with the full consciousness that harm to one would mean harm to all—the realization at last of the meaning of the word "Commonwealth."

In further explanation of his position he said that he was compelled

> Once to hope that the ugly disgraces of civilization might be got rid of by the conscious will of intelligent persons; yet, as I strove to stir up people to this reform, I found that the vulgarities of civilization lay deeper than I had thought, and little by little I was driven to the conclusion that all these uglinesses are but the outward expression of the innate moral baseness into which we are forced by our present form of society, and that it is futile to attempt to deal with them from the outside.

The unhappy condition of the modern workingman, as compared with the workingman of the past, was a theme to which Morris returned again and again. He says:

> Now, they work consciously for a livelihood and blindly for a mere abstraction of a world-market which they do not know of, but with no thought of the work passing through their hands. Then, they

worked to produce wares and to earn their livelihood by means of them; and their only market they had close at hand, and they knew it well. Now, the result of their work passes through the hands of half a dozen middlemen. Then, they worked directly for their neighbors, understanding their wants, and with no one coming between them. Huckstering which was then illegal, has now become the main business of life, and of course those who practice it most successfully are better rewarded than anyone else in the community. Now, people work under the direction of an absolute master whose power is restrained by a trade's union, in absolute hostility to that master. Then, they worked under the direction of their own collective wills by means of trade guilds. Now, the factory hand, the townsman is a different animal from the countryman. Then, every man was interested in agriculture, and lived with the green fields coming close to his own doors. In short, the difference between the two may be told very much in these words: "In those days daily life as a whole was pleasant, although its accidents might be rough and tragic. Now, daily life is dreary, stupid, wooden, and the only pleasure is in excitement, even if that pleasure should be more or less painful or terrible."

In his Utopian romance, *News from Nowhere,* Morris presents us with a condition of human society in which there are no laws nor lawyers, no judges, no government. He aims at escaping wholly from the complex relations of modern life, and seeks to enter into a state of primal, untrammeled simplicity. According to Mr. Lionel Johnson, he shows a "loving and personal regard for the very earth itself, . . . that sense of the motherhood of the earth which makes a man love the smell of the fields after rain, or the look of running water." The leading thoughts which the author seeks to impress upon the reader are that "pleasure in work is the secret of art and content," and that "delight in physical life upon the earth is the natural state of man."

The year 1888 saw the beginning of that cycle of prose romances upon which Morris continued to work until the end of his life. *A Tale of the House of the Wolfings* appeared in December, 1888. In 1890 was published *The Roots of the Mountains.* In this year, also, *The Story of the Glittering Plain* was printed as a serial in Macmillan's *English Illustrated Magazine.* Then followed *News from Nowhere,* which in turn was followed by *The Wood Beyond the World.* In 1895 appeared the volume entitled *Of Child Christopher and Goldilind the Fair,* which was succeeded, in 1896, by *The Well at the World's End,* the last work which Mr. Morris published before his death. *The Water of the Wondrous Isles* and *The Sundering Flood* are posthumous works, in character not unlike their predecessors.

Morris took up the work of printing and book decoration in the same spirit in which he engaged in other arts. All the volumes which have come from the Kelmscott press are models of beauty and design, and show a return to the earlier styles of printing and binding when thought and individuality went into the making of each book. Superadded to this is an originality of detail and execution which set the Kelmscott publications quite apart from the usual modern products of the press.

In the month of February, 1896, Morris's health gave way, and his friends began to entertain for him serious alarm. Afterward he seemed to rally a little. But on the third of October, 1896, the end came, and he tranquilly passed away at Kelmscott House, Hammersmith. The funeral was unostentatious, as he would have desired. At Lechlade station the remains were placed on a harvest cart, instead of a hearse. The body of this cart was painted yellow, the wheels red, and the framework had been festooned with vines, willow branches, flowers, and berries. "The roan mare in the shafts had vine leaves in its blinkers, and strings of vines were festooned across the top of the wain. The bottom of the cart was lined with moss." Thus the body of William Morris was conveyed to the churchyard of his beloved Kelmscott. The grave lies shadowed by tall trees and buried in long grass, close to the wall of the little churchyard where it is skirted by the country road—a remote and quiet resting place for one who, throughout his busy and strenuous days, dreamed of that happy bourne "where beyond these voices there is peace."

Says a certain writer of the benefits which resulted for the age from his artistic service:

His whole life was a vivid and in many respects a successful protest against the squalor of modern industrialism. To him, more than to any other man, we owe our emancipation from the hideous vulgarity of middle-Victorian house decoration and upholstery. Others preached, but William Morris, in whom a keen artistic sense was happily allied to skilled workmanship, was able to supplement precept by practice and visibly demonstrate the superiority of his methods. . . . He warred with brilliant success against the tyranny of ugliness . . . surely no mean achievement in a mechanical and utilitarian age.

III

JOHN KEATS

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JOHN KEATS

No other name, perhaps, in the entire range of English literature is so significant of precocious genius, vivid and beautiful imagination, and unexampled word-painting. That a man dying in the twenty-sixth year of his age, after a comparatively brief season of literary activity, should leave behind him such an artistic and satisfying body of verse, is sufficiently remarkable; but when the fact is also noted that this young writer was the founder of a new school in the art of poetry—a school which to-day is most popular and flourishing—the circumstance becomes historical in its value. Despite his limited career, so rapid was the maturity of his intellectual energies that the works which John Keats has left to the world will continue to be read, wherever the English language is spoken, with renewed astonishment and delight.

Not infrequently, in these passing days, sundry defenses of poetry are written for the encouragement of the faithful. It is ominous that poetry should at any time be regarded as needing defense; for if it bears not within itself its own justification, if it no longer makes an appeal to the heart of man, then should the discredited bard hang his harp upon the willows and possess his soul in silence. But who will venture to affirm that poetry has lost its power to stir the human heart, when such a poet as Keats owns an ever-widening circle of appreciative readers among the finest spirits of the world?

To read the poems of Keats is not unlike indulging in a draught of rare old vintage; he makes his reader drunk with music; he fairly intoxicates with the richness of his song. It is impossible steadfastly to peruse such poetry; it cloys with too much melody. His finest verses are exquisitely sweet and tender, and possess a native birdlike quality that goes straight to the heart. Keats lived in a world of the past. He moved amid a troop of fantastic shadows half human, half divine, god and goddess, faun and satyr, nymph and hamadryad, until to him the unreal became the real, and "the thing that was not as the thing that was." He was bewildered in the mazes of his own imaginings; there he ranged like an uncurbed steed; yet nothing passed from under his hand that did not bear the magic impress which sealed it "a joy forever." It was a favorite idea of Goethe that what once has gladdened us can never afterward be wholly lost out of our life; so the spirit of beauty, unconsciously imbibed by Keats, grew with his growth until it found expression in other beauty, and "blossomed in delight."

His history is a melancholy one, and as a victim of literary assassination through political and personal malice it is small wonder that he was spoken of in his own day as "poor Keats." That the poet was unfavorably affected by the virulent attacks which were made upon his verse has been denied, as impeaching the robustness of his character. Yet it can scarcely be doubted that such was the mental and physical condition of the poet that the germs of disease, already latent in his constitution, were rapidly developed into activity by the suffering and disappointment he must have experienced through the injustice done to his work, as well as through his unhappy love. Shelley believed that this was so, and he certainly could not have been ignorant of the facts in the case. Taking place in literature beside those earlier and incomparable masters of song, Chaucer and Spenser, Keats in some respects seems as remote from the present time as they; yet it is little more than an old man's lifetime since, an awkward, bashful youth, he sought the entrance to Hazlitt's lecture room or made his memorable journey to Scotland, Devonshire, and the Isle of Wight.

Of humble parentage, John Keats first saw the light of the natural day in London, October 29, or 31 (it is not determined which), 1795, at the house of his grandfather, who kept a large livery stable on the Pavement in Moorfields. The boy's health was always fragile, for he had been a seven-months' child, and his birth is said to have been prematurely hastened by his mother's intense love of pleasure, though in his earlier years his constitution presented but little indication of the peculiar debility attendant upon such cases. He was one of five children, Edward dying in infancy, and during his boyhood, which was spent at a good, second-class school, seems to have been notable chiefly for his warm attachment to fistic encounters. He possessed, however, an extreme facility in getting through the daily tasks of school, which seemed to make no great demand upon his attention, yet in which he never lagged behind the others. His easy skill in all manly exercises, and the complete ingenuousness of his disposition, rendered him very popular.

After remaining some time at school his intellectual ambition seemed suddenly to develop. He had been a leader in athletic sports; he now determined to capture the first prize in literature, and in this he was successful. The son of his tutor, a Mr. Clarke, of Enfield, discovered and encouraged the poetical faculty in the young poet, whom he introduced to Leigh Hunt. Hunt was ever after the warm friend of Keats, whom the elder poet undoubtedly brought to the notice of the public. Indeed, Hunt was to Keats what Schiller was to Körner. Our poet left school "with little Latin and less Greek." The twelve books of the "Æneid" probably constituted the limits of his Latin excursions. His acquaintance with the Greek mythology, which he afterward employed to such splendid purpose, was derived mainly from Lemprière's *Dictionary,* a volume which has not yet been superseded by some modern works of a more pretentious kind. The parents of Keats both died while he was young. His portion of the property left by them amounted to nearly two thousand pounds. It would seem that this should have sufficed to preserve the poet from financial difficulties for some time; yet we learn of his having been obliged to secure pecuniary aid almost immediately after attaining his majority. But it ought to be noted here that Keats was of a generous nature, and his purse was ever open to his friends, some of whom did not scruple to avail themselves of his freehandedness.

Just after leaving school, without his wishes having been consulted in the matter, he was apprenticed by his guardian to a surgeon at Edmonton, where Mr. Cowden Clark became his neighbor and friend. Mr. Clark introduced him to the poet, Hon. William Robert Spencer, whose writings at once exerted a most powerful and lasting effect on the plastic mind of the younger man. Chaucer was his next passion, and for a brief period he seems to have taken not a little pleasure in the stormy and lurid lines of Lord Byron. But Edmund Spenser opened to Keats a new poetic world, and he went racing through "The Faerie Queene" like a colt newly turned to pasture. Indeed, an early—if not quite the earliest—attempt of Keats at verse-making was an imitation of Spenser in the peculiar stanzaic form which was the invention of the latter poet, and to which his name has been given. In 1817 Keats, having just then come of age, published his first volume of poems, which exhibited unmistakable signs of promise and, to the unprejudiced reader, some actual performance. His most valuable acquisition in consequence of this venture was the acquaintance and friendship of Shelley, Haydon, Godwin, Basil Montagu, Hazlitt, and a few others of literary reputation and eminence. His political views were manly and independent, and Leigh Hunt was known to be his friend. These were sins which never could be forgiven by the *Quarterly Review.* In that partisan publication literary judgment and preferment were invariably meted out according to political congeniality of sentiments. Its writers were both servile and scurrilous, and with them a new author like Keats was but a foil for their bigotry and literary charlatanism. He was comparatively friendless and unknown, and even had he appealed to the public he could hardly have attracted notice, since he was yet but an obscure maker of verses not at all in the prevailing vogue. Hence, Gifford, the editor of the *Quarterly,* vented his spleen upon his inoffensive victim, conscious of immunity amid it all, since the object of his attack could no more than turn upon him as the worm turns beneath the foot that crushes it. A scion of the nobility, infected with *cacoethes scribendi,* might have scribbled the veriest nonsense and been certain of flattery and applause; but a singular genius, brilliant as singular, springing up of its own vitality in an out-of-the-way corner, was by all means to be extinguished. Gifford had formerly been a cobbler, and the son of the livery stable keeper was not worthy his critical sufferance. Thus it is ever with those narrow-minded persons who, by the power or caprice of accident, rise from a vulgar obscurity into the public view; they never can tolerate a brother in good fortune, much less superior force or talents in that brother.

On the publication of Keats's next work, "Endymion," Gifford attacked it with all the bitterness of which his pen was capable, and did not hesitate, before he saw the poem, to announce to the publisher his fell intention. Keats had endeavored, as much as was consistent with honesty and independence, to conciliate the critics at large, as may be observed in the brief preface to "Endymion." It seems almost incredible, at the present stage of literary progress, that such a swashbuckling style of criticism as that indulged in by *Blackwood's* and the *Quarterly Review* should have passed current with any respectable portion of an enlightened public; and to their credit be it said that here and there generous voices were raised, the kindly utterances of which must have been as balm to the hurts of the young poet's soul. He merited to be treated with lenity, not wounded with the envenomed shafts of political animosity for errors of literary taste which time was certain to correct. Of intense sentitiveness, and his frame already touched by a mortal distemper, he felt that his hopes were blighted and his attempts to obtain honorable public notice frustrated. Some years ago an article appeared in the *North British Review* in which the writer sought to prove that the critiques in the *Quarterly* had exerted no influence whatever in inducing the fatal disease by which Keats's earthly career was so early terminated. In more recent articles from various pens, celebrating the centennial of the birth of Keats, the same views have been advanced. But Chambers, alluding to the "Endymion," says:

> The poem was criticised in a strain of contemptuous severity by the *Quarterly Review;* and such was the sensitiveness of the young poet panting for distinction, and flattered by a few private friends, that the critique embittered his existence and induced a fatal disease.

And this is the testimony of Shelley in the days long before the present log-rolling set of London would have rendered such witness unnecessary, if not impossible:

> The first effects are described to me to have resembled insanity, and it was by assiduous watching that he was restrained from effecting purposes of

suicide. The agony of his sufferings at length produced the rupture of a blood vessel in the lungs, and the usual process of consumption appears to have begun.

Shelley's fearful arraignment of Gifford in the prefatory note to "Adonais" lends additional emphasis to the foregoing words. Lord Byron, alluding to Keats in the eleventh canto of "Don Juan," says:

> Poor fellow! his was an untoward fate:
> 'Tis strange the mind, that very fiery particle,
> Should let itself be snuff'd out by an article.

Keats's book abounded with passages of rarest beauty and truest poetry, and it is difficult to decide whether the cowardice or the cruelty of the attack most deserves execration. The following lines, taken from the poem almost at random, represent Endymion as wandering in semi-madness through the underworld, and there coming unexpectedly upon the sleeping Adonis:

> After a thousand mazes overgone,
> At last, with sudden step, he came upon
> A chamber, myrtle-walled, embower'd high,
> Full of light, incense, tender minstrelsy,
> And more of beautiful and strange beside:
> For on a silken couch of rosy pride,

In midst of all, there lay a sleeping youth
Of fondest beauty; fonder, in fair sooth,
Than sighs could fathom, or contentment reach;
And coverlids gold-tinted like the peach,
Or ripe October's faded marigolds,
Fell sleek about him in a thousand folds—
Not hiding up an Apollonian curve
Of neck and shoulder, nor the tenting swerve
Of knee from knee, nor ankles pointing light;
But rather giving them to the fill'd sight
Officiously. Sideway his face reposed
On one white arm, and tenderly unclosed,
By tenderest pressure, a faint damask mouth
To slumbering pout; just as the morning south
Disparts a dew-lipp'd rose. . . . Hard by
Stood serene cupids watching silently.
One, kneeling to a lyre, touched the strings,
Muffling to death the pathos with his wings,
And, ever and anon, uprose to look
At the youth's slumber; while another took
A willow bough, distilling odorous dew,
And shook it on his hair; another flew
In through the woven roof, and fluttering-wise
Rain'd violets upon his sleeping eyes.

The following stanzas from "The Eve of St. Agnes" are distinctly in advance of the previous quotation, both in manner and power of expression. Keats progressed in his art to the very period of his "taking off."

Out went the taper as she hurried in;
Its little smoke, in pallid moonshine died:
She closed the door, she panted all akin
To spirits of the air, and visions wide:
No uttered syllable, or, woe betide!
But to her heart, her heart was voluble,
Paining with eloquence her balmy side;
As though a tongueless nightingale should swell
Her throat in vain, and die, heart stifled, in her
dell.

A casement high and triple-arch'd there was,
All garlanded with carven imageries
Of fruits, and flowers, and bunches of knot-grass,
And diamonded with panes of quaint device,
Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes,
As are the tiger moth's deep-damask'd wings;
And in the midst 'mong thousand heraldries,
And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings,
A shielded scutcheon blush'd with blood of queens
and kings.

One of Keats's latest essays in poetry was the stately but incomplete "Hyperion." For powerful word-painting, gloomy grandeur of conception, and the self-poised, almost weird, skill with which the entire picture is produced stroke by stroke, it would be difficult to match the selection which follows:

Deep in the shady sadness of a vale,
Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,
Far from the fiery noon, and eve's one star,
Sat gray-hair'd Saturn, quiet as a stone,
Still as the silence round about his lair;
Forest on forest hung about his head
Like cloud on cloud. No stir of air was there,
Not so much life as on a summer's day
Robs not one light seed from the feather'd grass,
But where the dead leaf fell, there did it rest.
A stream went voiceless by, still deadened more
By reason of his fallen divinity
Spreading a shade: the naiad, 'mid her reeds,
Press'd her cold finger closer to her lips.
Along the margin-sand large footmarks went,
No further than to where his feet had stray'd,
And slept there since. Upon the sodden ground
His old right hand lay nerveless, listless, dead,
Unsceptered; and his realmless eyes were closed;
While his bow'd head seemed list'ning to the earth,
His ancient mother, for some comfort yet.

Lord Byron, who justly regarded the death of Keats as a loss to English literature, said of the poem from which the foregoing lines are taken: "His fragment of 'Hyperion' seems actually inspired by the Titans, and is as sublime as Æschylus." Amid the world's sweetest songs will ever be cherished the subtly beautiful "Ode to the Nightingale." The intense sympathy with the great deep which seemed to possess the young poet has probably been experienced in equal degree by but one other "builder of lofty rhyme"—namely, Swinburne. This sonnet stands in evidence of the manner in which Keats could write of the sea:

It keeps eternal whisperings around
  Desolate shores, and with its mighty swell
  Gluts twice ten thousand caverns, till the spell
Of Hecate leaves them their old shadowy sound.
Often 'tis in such gentle temper found
  That scarcely will the very smallest shell
  Be moved for days from where it sometime fell
When last the winds of heaven were unbound.

O, ye who have your eyeballs vexed and tired,
  Feast them upon the wideness of the sea;
    O, ye whose ears are dimmed with uproar rude,
  Or fed too much with cloying melody,
    Sit ye near some old cavern's mouth and brood
Until ye start, as if the sea nymphs quired.

Perhaps no other poet, save Goethe, has ever obtained such immediate entrance into the lovely and precious arcana of nature. To the eye of Keats nature unveiled her most secret charm. Let it not for a moment be believed that his extraordinary gift was but the result of an abnormal and morbid habit of sensation. Genius, whatever the forms it may assume, not seldom reaches its rarest perfection where common life is most dreary and inane. Read the riddle, ye who can. It has been said that Keats's friendships were always founded on a slight and unsubstantial basis, that his own nature was so preeminently selfish and his every aspiration so self-involved, that every friendship was rendered precarious which he ever formed. Schiller, in a letter to Körner, said, "O how beautiful and divine is the union of two souls which meet on their way to the Godhead!" The whole story of Keats's life determines that he felt no less the potency of a genuine friendship; otherwise it were passing strange that he should have been able to knit to himself with bands stronger than steel such a man as Severn, who, through all that prolonged tragedy of the poet's final sufferings, proved the ultimate possibilities of human devotion. In a letter to a friend Keats says:

> We cannot expect to give away many hours to pleasure; circumstances are like clouds, continually gathering and bursting while we are laughing. The seed of trouble is put into the wide arable land of events; while we are laughing at sprouts it grows, and suddenly bears a poisonous fruit, which we must pluck. Even so we have leisure to reason on the misfortunes of our friends; our own touch us too nearly for words.

Here appear those rigid habits of introspection practiced by every great mind, but not that self-centering of the impulses of love so destructive of every gracious emotion. The poet well knew the value of a human soul:

> That man is more than half of nature's treasure,
> Of that fair beauty which no eye can see,
> Of that sweet music which no ear can measure.

About two years before the death of Keats the one great event of his life began—his love affair. A new phase is now discovered in the character of the poet, flatly contradicting those who have denied that he was capable of intense passion, thereby depriving all future works he might have produced, had he lived, of the force and substance which the works he has left us do not possess. In his letters, edited by Milnes, and published many years ago, we obtain a few distinct and vivid glimpses of the object of his desires. He writes to his sister:

> She is not a Cleopatra, but at least a Charmian; she has a rich Eastern look, she has fine eyes and manners. When she comes into the room she makes the same impression as the beauty of a leopardess; she is too fine and conscious of herself to repulse any man that may address her; from habit she thinks that *nothing particular:* I always find myself more at ease with such a woman.
>
> She is a fine thing, speaking in a worldly way, for there are two distinct tempers of mind in which we judge of things—the worldly, theatrical, pantomimical, and the unearthly, spiritual, and ethereal. In the former, Bonaparte, Lord Byron, and the Charmian hold the first place in our minds; in the latter, John Howard, Bishop Hooker, rocking his child's cradle, and you, my dear sister, are the conquering feelings. As a man of the world I love the rich talk of a Charmian; as an eternal being I love the thought of you. I should like her to ruin me, and I should like you to save me.

This concluding sentence, though sounding very much like nonsense, is nevertheless not unimportant. It is obvious that when

Keats wrote it the first alternative would have seemed preferable to the second. Indeed, his subsequent story shows beyond question that the "worldly, theatrical, pantomimical" decidedly outweighed, in the poet's practical estimation, the "unearthly, spiritual, and ethereal." This "Charmian," whatever the fair qualities of mind and heart of which she may have been possessed, soon brought into captivity the profoundest impulses of her lover's nature, simply by the peculiar character of her personal attractions. Nor does it appear that Fanny Brawne scorned the advances of the ardent poet, though she seems to have been far from experiencing toward him an equal fervor of devotion. She was not inconsolable at his loss, and after his pitiful death duly settled down to the duties of a commonplace English housewife. It is almost a sarcasm of destiny that she has been preserved from oblivion alone by her association with the hectic, passionate, and querulous young man whose memory she evidently held in slight regard.

It may not be uninteresting to here set in juxtaposition marriage views so entirely dissimilar as those of Schiller and Keats. In a letter to a friend Schiller said:

> I must marry—that is settled. All my inducements to life and activity are worn out; this is the only one which I have not tried. I must have a being near me which belongs to me, which I can and must make happy. You know how desolate is my spirit, how melancholy my ideas. If I cannot weave hope into my existence—hope which has almost deserted me—if I cannot wind up anew the run-down machinery of my thoughts and feelings, it will soon be all over with me.

Keats, whose sentiments at one time were the direct antitheses of Schiller's, wrote to a newly married brother in America:

> Notwithstanding your happiness and your recommendations, I hope I shall never marry. Though the most beautiful creature were waiting for me at the end of a journey or walk, though the carpet were made of silk and the curtain of the morning clouds, the chairs and sofas stuffed with cygnet's down, the food manna, the wine beyond claret, the window opening on Windemere, I should not feel, or rather my happiness should not be so fine; and my solitude is sublime. Then, instead of what I have described, there is a sublimity to welcome me home; the roaring of the wind is my wife, the stars through my

> window-panes are my children. The mighty abstract idea of beauty in all things I have stifles the more divided and minute domestic happiness. An amiable wife and sweet children I contemplate as parts of that beauty, but I must have a thousand of those beautiful particles to fill up my heart. I feel more and more every day, as my imagination strengthens, that I do not live in this world alone, but in a thousand worlds. . . . Those things, combined with the opinion I have formed of the quality of women, who appear to me as children, to whom I would rather give a sugarplum than my time, form a barrier against matrimony which I rejoice in.

That Keats completely revised his judgments in the particulars of which this letter treats, the quotations previously presented abundantly prove. The following lines, addressed to Mr. J. K. Reynolds before the time the "Charmian" fever overtook him, and when his health was already failing, also denote that Keats's views of the subject had undergone a change:

> One of the first pleasures I look to is your happy marriage, the more so since I have felt the pleasure of loving a sister-in-law. I did not think it possible to become so much attached in so short a time; things like these, and they are real, have made me resolve to have a care of my health.

Of the religious sentiments of the poet not much needs to be written. In one of his letters he thus meditates:

> Though a quarrel in the streets is a thing to be hated, the energies displayed in it are fine; the commonest man shows a grace in his quarrel. By a superior being our reasonings may take the same tone; though erroneous, they may be fine.

On one occasion he falls into the vulgar impiety of juxtaposing our Saviour and Socrates. That the mind of Keats was in a transitional state is evident. Through all his spiritual mutations appear an earnestness of purpose and an unbaffled groping after a high and fleeting ideal, lovely glimpses of which have been flashed upon his inner vision. In another letter he says:

> I have, of late, been molting—not for fresh feathers and wings; they are gone, and in their stead I hope to have a pair of sublunary legs. I have altered—not from a chrysalis into a butterfly, but the contrary. . . . A year ago I could not understand in the slightest degree Raphael's cartoons; now I begin to read them a little. . . . Some think I have lost that poetic fire and ardor I once had; the fact is, I perhaps have, but instead of that I hope I shall substitute a more thoughtful and quiet power.

Though the poetry of Keats is mainly objective in its character, and as such exhibits the most minute and careful observation, he did not lack those prolonged and profound inward searchings which prove to the serious and inquiring mind of how much greater interest is the esoteric than the exoteric world. The sonnet here presented reveals the undaunted and undefeated self-examinations of a courageous spirit:

Why did I laugh to-night? no voice will tell,
  No God, no demon of severe response
Deigns to reply from heaven or from hell;
  Then to my human heart I turn at once—
Heart! thou and I are here, sad and alone;
  I say, wherefore did I laugh?—O mortal pain!
O! darkness! darkness! ever must I moan
  To question heaven and hell and heart in vain—
Why did I laugh? I know this being's lease
  My fancy to its utmost blisses spreads,
Yet could I on this very midnight cease,
  And the world's gaudy ensigns see in shreds;
Verse, fame, and beauty are intense indeed,
But death intenser, death is life's high meed.

The following extract from still another letter will illustrate the passionate, almost rapturous, pleasure he experienced in the composition of his works. He says:

> This morning poetry has conquered. I have relapsed into those abstractions which are my only life. I feel escaped from a new and threatening sorrow; and am thankful for it. There is an awful warmth about my heart like a load of immortality.

Of the poetical character he observes:

> It has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogene. What shocks the virtuous philosopher delights the chameleon poet. . . . A poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence, because he has no identity; he is continually in for and filling some other body. The sun, the moon, the sea, and men and women, who are creatures of an impulse, are poetical, and have about them an unchangeable attribute; the poet has none; no identity; he is certainly the most unpoetical of all God's creatures.

That Keats was not a finished writer must, perhaps, be conceded; but that, like Körner, the poet-hero of Germany, he gave rich promise of a glorious fruitage will be granted. And they must indeed be poor judges of literature who are not delighted with what he has left.

A few words as to the temperament and personal appearance of the poet. His temper, until just before his death, always was of the gentlest description. It has already been remarked that he was a person of strong and irritable sensibilities, and so extreme was his sensitiveness that he would betray emotion even to tears on hearing of a noble action, or at the expression of a glowing thought or one of pathetic tenderness; yet both his moral and physical courage were above suspicion. The physiognomy of the poet was indicative of his character. Sensibility was predominant, but there was no lack of power in the somewhat pugnacious nose and mouth. His features were clearly defined, and delicately susceptible of every impression. His eyes were large and shadowy, his cheeks hollow and sunken, and his face pallid in repose. His hair was brown in color, and curled naturally. His head was small, and set upon broad, high shoulders, his body was long and abnormally large in proportion to his lower limbs, which, however, were not unshapely. His stature was low; and "his hands," says Leigh Hunt, "were faded, having prominent veins, which he would look upon and pronounce to belong to one who had seen fifty years." "There is death in that hand," said Coleridge, after having clasped the hand of Keats.

For several years before his demise the poet had felt disease creeping upon him, and knew that death was already busy in a system too imperfectly organized. He had imprudently neglected his own health to attend a dying brother, when he should have remembered it was also necessary to take care of himself. He was combating the keenness of his sorrow consequent upon his bereavement by the decease of his brother, when the Zoilus of the *Quarterly* attacked him, adding new pain to his already overwrought spirit, so that he told a friend one day, with tears, that "his heart was breaking." He was at length induced to try the climate of Italy. Thither he went to die. He was accompanied in his weakness by Severn, his valuable and attached friend and an artist of considerable talent. They first went to Naples, thence journeying to Rome, where Keats closed his eyes on this world February 24, 1821, being a little more than twenty-five years of age. He eagerly wished for death, and shortly before he died he said he "felt the daisies growing over him." "He suffered so much in his lingering," says Leigh Hunt, "that he used to watch the countenance of his physician for the favorable and fatal sentence, and express regret when he found it delayed." His remains were deposited in the cemetery of the Protestants at Rome, at the foot of the pyramid of Caius Cestius, near the Porta San Paolo. "It might make one in love with death," wrote Shelley, "to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place." A white marble tombstone, bearing a lyre, in *basso relievo,* and the following inscription—the closing words of which were his own—has been erected to his memory:

> This grave contains all that was mortal of a Young English Poet, who on his deathbed, in the bitterness of his heart at the malicious power of his enemies, desired these words to be engraved on his tombstone: "Here lies one whose name was writ in water." Feb. 24th, 1821.

IV

GEORGE ELIOT

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FEW, if any, luminaries in the bright galaxy of modern English novelists outshine that peculiar and vivid orb the splendor of which still burns steadily across "the dark background and abysm of time," though the glory of Trollope, Lytton, Kingsley, Reade, Scott, and even Dickens and Thackeray seems to wane through the passing decades which have quenched so many lesser lights. On the night of December 22, 1880, George Eliot conquered "the fever called living," and entered into her rest, only a few months after the literary Grundies were convulsed with astonishment at the announcement of the marriage of this eminent woman with Mr. J. W. Cross, a London banker, formerly resident in New York. It has been stated that Mary Ann (or Marian) Evans was the daughter of a poor clergyman who at one time was attached to the

Church of England, but eventually became a Presbyterian minister. It has been declared, also, that she was adopted in early life by another clergyman of considerable wealth, who afforded her opportunities for securing a first-class education. These statements are entirely inaccurate. The facts of her early life are little known, and she herself was characterized by the reticence of genius concerning her own biographical data.

Mary Ann Evans was born at Arbury Farm, in Warwickshire, England, November 22, 1819. She remained in the parental home, first at Griff, on the same estate, and afterward at Coventry, until 1849. Her father, Robert Evans, was a land agent and surveyor, and served for many years as agent for the estates of more than one old Warwickshire family. In the Midlands he is still held in kind remembrance as a man of sterling probity and uprightness of conduct. Undoubtedly this father was the prototype of more than one admirable character in the stories of his gifted daughter.

George Eliot's early years were passed in the regions haunted by the memories of Shakespeare. Though it is not clear just how or where her education was obtained, she seems to have received very careful and adequate mental training. Leaving home, she came to London while yet a young woman, and devoted herself to serious literature. She became associated with John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer, George Henry Lewes, John Chapman, and other writers in the *Westminster Review,* and in time came to sustain an editorial connection with that publication. In her twenty-sixth year she published a translation of Strauss's famous *Life of Jesus,* her first important work. Eight years later appeared her translation of Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity*. The dialectic nature of the products of her pen introduced her to the philosophic society of that period, of which she soon became a leading member. It is a question whether the abstruse studies in which she engaged were of any great advantage to her in her equipment as a novelist, though doubtless in mental poise and accuracy in the use of language she was steadied and guided by the discipline which she received in her philosophic researches.

Such a genius as Miss Evans possessed could not long remain in the thralls of pure didacticism, and at the suggestion of Herbert Spencer she entered the field of the novelist. The *nom de plume* "George Eliot" she employed for the first time when her initial work of fiction was sent to *Blackwood's Magazine.* The manuscript of this book, *Scenes of Clerical Life,* was dispatched anonymously to the editor of *Blackwood's,* who at once accepted it, believing that he discovered in it the first fruits of an unusual and superior ability. George Henry Lewes acted as Miss Evans's agent and adviser in this transaction, and about the same time began that intimate association and literary companionship which was to terminate only with the death of Lewes, in 1878. Even at this day it is difficult to believe that the circumstances and events of a peculiar professional life, depicted with such rare skill, pathos, and fidelity, were not at some time included in the writer's personal experience. This earliest book of stories revealed in George Eliot the possession of that loftiest attribute of genius, the power of self-effacement and the projection of the author's mind with intensest sympathy into her own imaginative creations, until they become as real and vital as their antitypes of flesh and blood. This gift is sometimes called the dramatic instinct, and is disclosed in its perfection by Shakespeare, and in a scarcely less degree, though in an almost wholly subjective relation, by Browning, and, notwithstanding the eccentric manner of its presentation, in another realm by George Meredith. Of the work of an author endowed with the dramatic instinct in its highest form the delighted reader might say, as Emerson remarked of Montaigne's essays, "Cut these words, and they would bleed." It is hardly possible to illustrate our meaning by any passage wrenched from its connection, unless it be one which, with its context, is familiar to the reader and in his thought receives emphasis from its setting in the completed story. However, we will venture the following excerpt from *Middlemarch.* It is a portion of that chapter descriptive of the scene between Will Ladislaw and Rosamond Lydgate after they have been surprised by Dorothea Casaubon in a confidential interview:

> It would have been safe for Will, in the first instance, to have taken up his hat and gone away; but he had felt no impulse to do this; on the contrary, he had a horrible inclination to stay and shatter Rosamond with his anger. It seemed as impossible to bear the fatality she had drawn down on him without venting his fury as it would be to a panther to bear the javelin wound without springing and biting. And yet—how could he tell a woman that he was ready to curse her? He was fuming under a repressive law which he was forced to acknowledge. He was dangerously poised, and Rosamond's voice now brought the decisive vibration. In flutelike tones of sarcasm she said:
>
> "You can easily go after Mrs. Casaubon and explain your preference."
>
> "Go after her!" he burst out, with a sharp edge in his voice. "Do you think she would turn to look at me, or value any word I ever uttered to her again as more than a dirty feather? Explain! How can a man explain at the expense of a woman?"

"You can tell her what you please," said Rosamond, with more tremor.

"Do you suppose she would like me better for sacrificing you? She is not a woman to be flattered because I made myself despicable—to believe that I must be true to her because I was a dastard to you."

He began to move about with the restlessness of a wild animal that sees prey but cannot reach it. Presently he burst out again:

"I had no hope before—not much—of anything better to come. But I had one certainty—that she believed in me. Whatever people had said or done about me, she believed in me. That's gone! She'll never again think me anything but a paltry pretense—too nice to take heaven except upon flattering conditions, and yet selling myself for any devil's change by the sly. She'll think of me as an incarnate insult to her, from the first moment we—"

Will stopped as if he had found himself grasping something that must not be thrown and shattered. He found another vent for his rage by snatching up Rosamond's words again, as if they were reptiles to be throttled and flung off.

"Explain! Tell a man to explain how he dropped into hell! Explain my preference! I never had a *preference* for her, any more than I have a preference for breathing. No other woman exists by the side of her. I would rather touch her hand if it were dead than I would touch any other woman's living."

Not a little has been said regarding George Eliot's tendency to moralize, again and again interrupting the course of her narrative to deliver a homily more or less obvious even to the casual reader. This may or may not be true; in the opinion of at least one of her readers George Eliot's preachments are of a kind that we could illy spare in a world which is not too easily impressed with the value of moral excellence and the things "pure," "lovely," and "of good report." To return to *Scenes of Clerical Life,* who that traverses "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story" would be content to omit from it such reflections, mingled with glimpses of natural phenomena, as follows?

> The inexorable ticking of the clock is like the throb of pain to sensations made keen by a sickening fear. And so it is with the great clockwork of nature. Daisies and buttercups give way to the brown waving grasses, tinged with the warm red sorrel; the waving grasses are swept away, and the meadows lie like emeralds set in the bushy hedgerows; the tawny-tipped corn begins to bow with the weight of the full ear; the reapers are bending amongst it, and it soon stands in sheaves; then, presently, the patches of yellow stubble lie side by side with streaks of dark-red earth, which the plow is turning up in preparation for the new-threshed seed. And this passage from beauty to beauty, which to the happy is

like the flow of a melody, measures for many a human heart the approach of foreseen anguish—seems hurrying on the moment when the shadow of dread will be followed up by the reality of despair. . . .

While this poor little heart was being bruised with a weight too heavy for it nature was holding on her calm, inexorable way, in unmoved and terrible beauty. The stars were rushing in their eternal courses; the tides swelled to the level of the last expectant weed; the sun was making brilliant day to busy nations on the other side of the swift earth. The stream of human thought and deed was hurrying and broadening onward. The astronomer was at his telescope; the great ships were laboring over the waves; the toiling eagerness of commerce, the fierce spirit of revolution, were only ebbing in brief rest; and sleepless statesmen were dreading the possible crisis of the morrow. What were our little Tina and her trouble in this mighty torrent, rushing from one awful unknown to another? Lighter than the smallest center of quivering life in the water drop, hidden and uncared for as the pulse of anguish in the breast of the tiniest bird that has fluttered down to its nest with the long-sought food, and has found the nest torn and empty.

The three stories, "The Sad Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton," "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story," and "Janet's Repentance," which constitute *Scenes of Clerical Life*, scarcely betray the hand of the novice. So well managed and easy is the dialogue, so smooth are the transitions of the narrative, so finely balanced and adjusted are all the elements of the characters portrayed, that Miss Evans seems to have appeared completely equipped in the literary arena, as Minerva is said to have emerged full-armed from the brow of Jupiter. Though, at this day, it would seem that anyone possessed of literary perception must have discovered in these tales of provincial life evidences of the remarkable imaginative fertility and intellectual richness of the author's mind, it was not until the publication of her next story, *Adam Bede,* in 1857, that her reputation was assured as a fresh and cogent personality in the field of letters. Upon the appearance of this new book George Eliot sprang at a single bound into the very van of modern British novelists. *Adam Bede* has been criticised on at least two grounds: first, it is alleged that the story presents a false and distorted portrayal of "the people called Methodists;" and, second, that in certain portions of the book subjects tabooed in polite circles are treated with indelicacy. As to the first objection, anyone familiar with the history of early Methodism in England will exonerate the author of *Adam Bede* from the charge of inaccuracy or a willful perversion of facts. It cannot be denied that, amid the varying phases, the stirring scenes, and the intense agitation of rude but earnest human nature, early Methodism produced strange and diverse developments both of piety and conduct. The second charge would scarcely be insisted on in these days by any person at all familiar with the products of some recent writers of fiction—though the signs of a healthful reaction against the pruriency of much recent so-called literature, and the demand for Stevenson's, Weyman's, Doyle's, Hope's, and Crockett's romances of derring-do and chivalrous adventure, indicate a return to good old Sir Walter's knightly tales, and the generous and sweetly human pages of Thackeray, Dickens, Hawthorne, Reade, Trollope, and Kingsley.

With what strength and delicacy George

Eliot can treat these subjects which are generally tabooed the ensuing passage from *Adam Bede* attests:

> It was about ten o'clock when Hetty set off, and the slight hoarfrost that had whitened the hedges in the early morning had disappeared as the sun mounted the cloudless sky. Bright February days have a stronger charm of hope about them than any other days in the year. One likes to pause in the mild rays of the sun and look over the gate at the patient plow horses turning at the end of the furrow, and think that the beautiful year is all before one. The birds seem to feel just the same; their notes are as clear as the clear air. There are no leaves on the trees and hedgerows, but how green all the grassy fields are! and the dark purplish brown of the plowed earth and the bare branches is beautiful, too. What a glad world this looks as one drives or rides along the valleys and over the hills! I have often thought so when, in foreign countries, where the fields and woods have looked to me like our English Loamshire—the rich land tilled with just as much care, the woods rolling down the gentle slopes to the green meadows—I have come on something by the roadside which has reminded me that I am not in Loamshire: an image of a great agony—the agony of the cross. It has stood, perhaps, by the clustering apple blossoms, or in the broad sunshine by the cornfield, or at a turning by the wood where a clear brook was gurgling below; and surely, if there came a traveler to this world who knew nothing of

the story of man's life upon it, this image of agony would seem to him strangely out of place in the midst of this joyous nature. He would not know that, hidden behind the apple blossoms, or among the golden corn, or under the shrouding boughs of the wood, there might be a human heart beating heavily with anguish—perhaps a young blooming girl, not knowing where to turn for refuge from swift-advancing shame; understanding no more of this life of ours than a foolish lost lamb wandering farther and farther in the nightfall on the lonely heath, yet tasting the bitterest of life's bitterness.

Such things are sometimes hidden among the sunny fields and behind the blossoming orchards; and the sound of the gurgling brook, if you came close to one spot behind a small bush, would be mingled for your ear with a despairing human sob. No wonder man's religion has much sorrow in it; no wonder he needs a suffering God.

Hetty, in her red cloak and warm bonnet, with her basket in her hand, is turning toward a gate by the side of the Treddleston road, but not that she may have a more lingering enjoyment of the sunshine and think hope of the long unfolding year. She hardly knows that the sun is shining; and for weeks now, when she has hoped at all, it has been for something at which she herself trembles and shudders. She only wants to be out of the high road, that she may walk slowly, and not care how her face looks as she dwells on wretched thoughts; and through this gate she can get into a field path behind the wide, thick hedgerows. Her great dark eyes wander blankly over the fields like the eyes of one who is desolate, homeless, unloved, not the promised bride of a brave, tender man. But there are no tears in them; her tears were all wept away in the weary night before she went to sleep.

After the publication of *Adam Bede,* in rapid succession followed *The Mill on the Floss, Silas Marner, Romola, Felix Holt, the Radical; Middlemarch, Daniel Deronda,* and *Theophrastus Such.* In the *Mill on the Floss* is presented, with all the skill of composition, nicest choice of incident, and the abounding resources of genius, the love of a brother and sister who in their death were not divided. But it is a moot point whether in *Middlemarch* or *Romola* the splendid literary ability of George Eliot reached its highest level. Perhaps the honors are about equally divided between the two volumes. In *Romola* the figure of Savonarola, the Dominican monk—imposing, dark, mysterious—stalks amid the lurid and stormy scenes which in Florence made tragic the closing years of the corrupt century in which he lived. It is with a loving hand that the writer has painted, stroke by stroke, the portrait of the great preacher and reformer, impressing upon her readers, in a manner never to be forgotten, the Frate's fiery eloquence, his consuming earnestness, his uncompromising boldness, his refinement and mysticism. The strong resemblance which the countenance of George Eliot bore to that of Savonarola has frequently been remarked, and it may have been the unconscious sympathy thus engendered within her that enabled her to produce so vital and memorable a portrayal of the Florentine prophet. One of the most artistically wrought, as well as realistic, incidents of modern fiction is that wherein Tito Melema escapes death by drowning in the stream only to meet it in the long grass on the river bank at the hands of his injured and frenzied father. This passage will also serve as an adequate example of the method by which George Eliot produces, word by word and sentence by sentence, the culminating and abiding impression:

> Tito knew him, but he did not know whether it was life or death that had brought him into the pres-

ence of his injured father. It might be death—and death might mean this chill gloom, with the face of the hideous past hanging over him forever.

But now Baldassarre's only dread was lest the young limbs should escape him. He pressed his knuckles against the round throat and knelt upon the chest with all the force of his aged frame. Let death come now.

Again he kept watch on the face. And when the eyes were rigid again he dared not trust them. He would never lose his hold till some one came and found them. Justice would send some witness, and then he, Baldassarre, would declare that he had killed this traitor, to whom he had once been a father. They would, perhaps, believe him now, and then he would be content with struggle of justice on earth—then he would desire to die with his hold on this body, and follow the traitor to hell that he might clutch him there.

And so he knelt, and so he pressed his knuckles against the round throat, without trusting to the seeming death, till the light got strong, and he could kneel no longer. Then he sat on the body, still clutching the neck of the tunic. But the hours went on, and no witness came. No eyes descried, afar off, the two human bodies among the tall grass by the riverside. Florence was busy with greater affairs and the preparation of a deeper tragedy.

Not long after these two bodies were lying in the grass Savonarola was being tortured, and crying out in his agony, "I will confess."

It was not until the sun was westward that a wagon, drawn by a mild gray ox, came to the edge of the grassy margin, and as the man who led it was leaning to gather up the round stones that lay heaped in readiness to be carried away he detected some startling object in the grass. The aged man had fallen forward, and his dead clutch was on the garment of the other. It was not possible to separate them—nay, it was better to put them into the wagon and carry them as they were into the great Piazza, that notice might be given to the Eight.

Romola is not George Eliot's most popular novel, but, as illustrating her vast constructive skill, the polemical bias of her mind, the singular ability with which she could turn current traditions and historical events to the novelist's account, her wide acquaintance with ancient and mediæval literature, and her power of absorbing the peculiar *aura* of an ardent nationality, this book will always be considered among her best. The virile quality of this great woman's writings is indicated by the fact that for years the pseudonym under which she wrote was accepted as the genuine name of a man of extraordinary genius and knowledge. We know of but one other such instance of equal interest on record, and that is of a notable French woman who for many years sent forth her writings to the world under the fictitious name of George Sand.

The private life of George Eliot has been made the subject of much unfair and ignorant discussion. The paucity of details regarding her domestic affairs renders it not altogether safe to pronounce judgment upon what may, superficially, perhaps, appear to be a violation of the sanctity of the marriage bond. It has already been stated that the manuscript of *Scenes of Clerical Life* was sent to the publishers of *Blackwood's Magazine* by George Henry Lewes. Mr. Lewes was a student of philosophy, the author of a few philosophical treatises, and the writer of a *Life of Goethe*, by which work he is best known. He had a wife who had abandoned him two or three times; after having condoned her offenses on former occasions, he at last refused to countenance longer her vagaries of passion, and so made their separation final. He met Mary Ann Evans, being attracted to her both by her philosophical writings and admiration for her superior intellectual attainments, and, though Miss Evans was reticent to an extreme degree, she was finally persuaded to share with him his home. It seems to have been a case of purely mental affinity. They lived together in London, and henceforth to her intimate friends George Eliot became known as Mrs. Lewes. Lewes became her literary agent and adviser, jealously guarding her every interest, and so protecting and fostering her intellectual life that she was enabled to develop it under the most favorable conditions. This intimate association and close literary friendship terminated only with the death of Mr. Lewes, in 1878. Mr. Lewes having been unable to obtain a divorce from his first, erring wife, the union between the philosopher and the authoress could not be rendered legal by either Church or State, though it was sanctioned by the approval and good wishes of a large circle of refined and intelligent personal friends. Not a few persons are disposed to regard with a lenient eye the moral vagaries of the possessors of genius. It has been said that "the being who is gifted with genius does not possess it; it possesses him, and he and we have to pay the penalty." But nature is a stern Nemesis, and every false position into which we may be betrayed involves its own sorrow and loss. In his volume entitled *My Confidences* Frederick Locker-Lampson says:

> I am sure that she [George Eliot] was very sensitive, and must have had many a painful half hour as the helpmate of Mr. Lewes. By accepting the position she had placed herself in opposition to the moral instincts of most of those whom she held most dear. Though intellectually self-contained, I believe she was singularly dependent on the emotional side of her nature. With her, as with nearly all women, she needed a something to lean upon. Though her conduct was socially indefensible, it would have been cruel, it would be stupid, to judge her exactly as one would judge an ordinary offender. What a genius she must have had to have been able to draw so many high-minded people to her! I have an impression that she felt her position acutely, and was unhappy. George Eliot was much to be pitied.

And elsewhere he says of the relation of George Eliot and Mr. Lewes, "He was ever on the alert to shield her from worries and annoyance, and keen to get her good terms from the publishers, but somehow it seemed an incongruous partnership."

George Eliot was a passionate admirer of personal beauty in either man or woman, as witness her descriptions of Hetty Sorrel and Tito Melema. Probably this was the result of intense consciousness of her own deficiencies in respect to physical comeliness. Locker-Lampson again writes:

> Nature had disguised George Eliot's apparently stoical yet really vehement and sensitive spirit, and her soaring genius, in a homely and insignificant form. Her countenance was equine—she was rather like a horse, and her head had been intended for a much larger body; she was not a tall woman. She wore her hair in not pleasing, out-of-fashion loops, coming down on either side of her face, so hiding her ears; her garments concealed her outline—they gave her a waist like a milestone. You will see her at her very best in the portrait by Sir Frederick Burton. To my mind George Eliot was a plain woman.

Of her habits of conversation the same writer observes:

> She had a measured way of conversing, restrained but impressive. When I happened to call she was

nearly always seated in the chimney corner on a low chair, and she bent forward when she spoke. As she often discussed abstract subjects, she might have been thought pedantic, especially as her language was sprinkled with a scientific terminology; but I do not think she was a bit of a pedant. Then, though she had a very gentle voice and manner, there was every now and then just a suspicion of meek satire in her talk. Her sentences unwound themselves very neatly and completely, leaving the impression of past reflection and present readiness; she spoke exceedingly well, but not with all the simplicity and *verve,* the happy *abandon* of certain practiced women of the world; however, it was in a way that was far more interesting. I have been told that she was most agreeable *en tete-a-tete;* that when surrounded by admirers she was apt to become oratorical—a different woman. She did not strike me as witty or markedly humorous; she was too much in earnest. She spoke as if with a sense of responsibility, and one cannot be exactly captivating when one's doing that.

Of the poetry of George Eliot not much needs to be written, though curiously enough she herself preferred it to her novels. It is pale and colorless, as compared with the iridescent splendors of her prose compositions. Her natural mode of expression was not in verse. While much of her prose is essentially poetical, her large powers evidently chafed under the restraints and limitations imposed by metrical laws and the exigencies of rhyme. While her patience as an artist was long and deep, she lacked that subtler gift or instinct which makes the poet the seer, and whereby his utterances are forged from the central fires of his life. "The Legend of Jubal," "How Lisa Loved the King," and "The Spanish Gypsy" are the most notable of her poetical writings. The didactic habit of her mind quenched the singer's sibylline rage. The following stanzas embody her nearest approach to lyric fire:

Sweet evenings come and go, love,
  They came and went of yore;
This evening of our life, love,
  Shall go and come no more.

When we have passed away, love,
  All things will keep their name;
But yet no life on earth, love,
  With ours will be the same.

The daisies will be there, love,
  The stars in heaven will shine;
I shall not feel thy wish, love,
  Nor thou my hands in thine.

A better time will come, love,
  And better souls be born;
I would not be the best, love,
  To leave thee now forlorn.

If the fame of George Eliot rested upon her poetry alone that fame to-day would be a vanishing quantity. It is an interesting psychological question, or perhaps a question in mental pathology, why so many great writers, unsatisfied with their noble conquests in the commoner field of prose, like good Captain Wegg, "drop into poetry." The examples of Macaulay, Carlyle, Ruskin, Charlotte Brontë, Charles Lamb, Thackeray, and, more recently, Mr. Gladstone in his translations from Horace, and Meredith and Hardy, occur at once as cases in point. Probably others could be recalled with a little effort of the memory. But there is one brief poem from the pen of George Eliot which is a beautiful and dignified composition, worthy the inspired muse of the most gifted of the tuneful ilk. These lines have been quoted frequently, but they may be introduced here as constituting the best specimen of George Eliot's now all-but-forgotten verse:

Oh may I join the choir invisible
Of those immortal dead who live again
In minds made better by their presence: live
In pulses stirred to generosity,
In deeds of daring rectitude, in scorn
For miserable aims that end with self,
In thoughts sublime that pierce the night like stars,
And with their mild persistence urge man's search
To vaster issues.

So to live is heaven:
To make undying music in the world,
Breathing as beauteous order that controls
With growing sway the growing life of man.
So we inherit that sweet purity
For which we struggled, failed, and agonized
With widening retrospect that bred despair.
Rebellious flesh that would not be subdued,
A vicious parent shaming still its child
Poor anxious penitence, is quick dissolved;
Its discords, quenched by meeting harmonies,
Die in the large and charitable air.
And all our rarer, better, truer self,
That sobbed religiously in yearning song,
That watched to ease the burden of the world,
Laboriously tracing what must be,
And what may yet be better—saw within
A worthier image for the sanctuary,
And shaped it forth before the multitude
Divinely human, raising worship so

To higher reverence more mixed with love—
That better self shall live till human Time
Shall fold its eyelids, and the human sky
Be gathered like a scroll within the tomb
Unread forever.

This is the life to come,
Which martyred men have made more glorious
For us who strive to follow. May I reach
That purest heaven, be to other souls
The cup of strength in some great agony,
Enkindle generous ardor, feel pure love,
Beget the smiles that have no cruelty—
Be the sweet presence of a good diffused,
And in diffusion ever more intense.
So shall I join the choir invisible
Whose music is the gladness of the world.

The later works of George Eliot were extremely successful in a pecuniary way. She received but fifteen hundred dollars for *Scenes of Clerical Life.* But *Middlemarch* brought her forty thousand dollars, and *Daniel Deronda* nearly as much more. Only one other female author has rivaled George Eliot as regards financial rewards of her work—Mrs. Humphry Ward.

Upon the death of Mr. Lewes, after a year and a half of virtual widowhood, George Eliot was married May 6, 1880, at St. George's, Hanover Square, London, to Mr. John Walter Cross. Mr. Cross was much younger than his bride, and had long been a valued and esteemed friend of both herself and Mr. Lewes. Says Locker-Lampson of the new union:

> George Eliot's more transcendental friends never forgave her for marrying. In a morally immoral manner they washed their virtuous hands of her. I could not help thinking it was the most natural thing for the poor woman to do. She was a heavily laden but interesting derelict, tossing among the breakers, without oars or rudder, and all at once the brave Cross arrives, throws her a rope, and gallantly tows her into harbor.

A little more than seven months after her marriage with Mr. Cross, George Eliot passed into that realm where Time himself "shall furl his wings and cease to be." The funeral of Mr. Lewes had been held in the mortuary chapel in Highgate Cemetery, and there the funeral of George Eliot was also held. It was a day of snow and slush, and a bitter wind was blowing, "but still," avers an eyewitness, "there was a remarkable gathering from all parts of England." Of her burial place a writer in the *London Chronicle* says:

> When you get to the top of Swain's Lane you see two gates; take the one on the right and, entering, keep to the left. The path sweeps round a little hillock, and in a few steps you see in front of you a great block of buildings. This is St. Pancras Infirmary. You keep straight on until you come to the last turning to the left; take that, and after ten yards you come on a plain gray granite obelisk and pedestal, together not more than ten feet high. Without your attention being called to this quiet memorial, amid so many elaborate commemorations of sorrow, you would pass it unnoted. But stop a moment and read. This is what you see:
>
> "Of those immortal dead who live again
> In minds made better by their presence."
>
> ---
>
> Here lies the Body of
> "George Eliot,"
> Mary Ann Cross,
> Born 22 November, 1819;
> Died 22 December, 1880.
>
> That is the simple yet eloquent inscription cut on the granite pedestal in severely plain letters of gold. The Spartan brevity and simplicity of it is in keeping with the great writer's life and philosophy. And the inevitableness of the "common lot" is unconsciously emphasized by the fact that on her right is a monument more ornate than her own, chron-

icling the death of an unknown family. Here, facing the east and the rising sun, lie the ashes of one who bore a proud name in the brilliant roll of English literature, resting after a busy life of earnest purpose and much great work accomplished. Many may regret that a more conspicuous, a more elaborate monument does not mark the *Friedensheim* of the author of *Middlemarch, Felix Holt, Adam Bede,* and *Romola.* These have to be reminded that George Eliot's most "enduring brass' is to be found in her works and the memory of her life.

There are not a few reviewers and self-appointed critics who persistently talk of some one's writing the great American novel, as though it must be a product differing in kind and in art from the great novels of other lands. It might be interesting to know just what these persons mean by the terms they employ—provided the conception is clear in their own minds. Where is the distinctively great English, French, or Russian novel? Neither *Tom Jones,* nor *Les Miserables,* nor *Peace and War* fulfill the requirments, for these are not and could not be sufficiently inclusive to portray every phase of the life and nationality which the author represented.

So if George Eliot has not produced a work of fiction which at its points of contact touch every side of English civilization, within her own field she has displayed a potentiality rivalled only by the master novelists of the world.

The attainments of George Eliot were remarkably extensive. She was a classical scholar, and to her familiarity with the principal modern languages she added an acquaintance with Russian and modern Greek. She was widely learned in the physical sciences, the arts and philosophies, and was a profound student in the history of human thought and investigation. The peculiar characteristics of her mind were acute analysis, unerring perception of fitness and relation, a luxuriant but chastened fancy, and a rare and delightful energy of expression. Her style is a compound of classicism and didacticism, of scientific technicality and broad colloquialism. Not one of her countrywomen of this or any former period, excepting Mrs. Browning, can compare with her in expressive ability, keenness of discrimination, and forceful and elegant English. Among female writers what Mrs. Browning is in poetry George Eliot is in prose. Though not so much given to the use of the incisive and vigorous Saxon words with which our language abounds as Mrs. Browning was, yet she fully equaled her in knowledge of the delicate shades of difference in nearly synonymous terms, while she easily surpassed her in methods of technical utterance and the fullness of her vocabulary. The mantle of the high-priestess of British novelists, the peeress of Dickens and Thackeray, and the greatest of that trio of great female story writers, Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, and George Eliot, lies where she dropped it. Who shall be worthy to wear it after her?

V

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI AND HIS SISTER CHRISTINA

V

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI AND HIS SISTER CHRISTINA

To one who believes that there is in a name some mysterious power influencing the destiny of a human being, the painter-poet, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, affords an example in evidence. Rossetti himself seems never to have forgotten the fact that he bore the name of Italy's greatest bard. The man upon whom devolves the burden of an illustrious name, if he be not borne down by it into listless despair, may be aroused to supreme endeavors to live up to the expectations of the friends who in addressing him involuntarily recall his glorious prototype.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti was a remarkable member of a remarkable family. Such a group of children as Dante Gabriel, William Michael, and Christina G. Rossetti are seldom found in the same household. Even the quiet, claustral spirit of the elder sister, Maria, was a shrine whence the clear-pointed flame of genius burned heavenward, though it was not for the world's curious gaze. Rossetti's father, Gabriele Rossetti, was a Neapolitan political refugee resident in London, and one of the most highly esteemed of Italy's recent patriotic poets. He was a profound and lifelong student of Dante, concerning whose works he cherished theories peculiarly his own. The mother of Dante Rossetti was of mixed English and Italian parentage, so that in the veins of the artist there was more Italian than English blood.

Gabriel Charles Dante Rossetti, known to the world as Dante Gabriel Rossetti, was born May 12, 1828, in London. He was the second of four children, Christina, his sister, being the youngest. In the characteristics which distinguished Dante Rossetti, and Christina as well, were included some of the rarest qualities of the two nationalities which in these notable lives came to their confluence. Dante and Christina were both scribblers in their childhood, writing stories and verses successively, the example being set them in their home by their tireless father, from whose pen flowed poems and other compositions innumerable. Dante's schooling was not of the broadest kind, though when he left King's College in the summer of 1842 he was reasonably well acquainted with Sallust, Ovid, and Vergil, knew the rudiments of Greek, and could read easily in French.

With Rossetti's peculiarities and skill in the art of painting we have little to do here, except as he illustrated the Preraphaelite theories of art by his brush as well as by his verse. Rossetti is better known as a writer than as a painter, since, throughout his entire life, he was averse to placing his canvases on public exhibition. His regular preparation for the profession of painting was of brief duration. After a period of study at Cary's drawing academy he was admitted as a student in the Antique School of the Royal Academy. He did not complete his course in this school, finding it irksome to subject himself to methods prescribed by others, and liking always to do things in his own way. As the head of the Preraphaelite Brotherhood he displayed a power and originality in his art work which compelled the attention of connoisseurs to the fact that a new intellectual force had made its advent among them. Ruskin early became one of Rossetti's patrons, so that the singular endowments of the young artist are beyond question. Notwithstanding the present tendency to belittle the so-called Preraphaelite movement—and Rossetti himself ere his death seemed to think lightly of it—the ability of such men as Rossetti, Millais, Holman Hunt, Woolner, Collinson, and Stephens exerted an influence which is felt at this very day in the world of art.

On the side of letters, also, it is no slight proof of poetic puissance to make one's voice heard and imitated amid the babel of minor singers ever challenging the public ear. Dante Rossetti early and easily rose above the mass of bardlings whose parrotlike repetitions of the master's manner might, mauger their maddening wearisomeness, be regarded as the sincerest form of flattery. When "The Blessed Damozel" appeared, written at the time Rossetti was in his nineteenth year, he who ran might read that a new luminary, brilliant and unique, had risen in our poetical skies. The extraordinary symbolism employed by this writer, the earthly passion projected into spiritual experiences, the human longing surviving amid celestial environments, the sensuous, almost sensual, beauty breathing through the entire poem, set its author apart as a real and distinct energy in the literature of his generation. This poem was avowedly written to be the counterpart of Poe's "Raven." As the latter poem depicts from the earthly viewpoint the yearnings of bereaved affection, so "The Blessed Damozel" portrays the same emotions from the celestial side. Scattered through this poem there are successive lines and stanzas as unforgetable as anything that has ever been written:

The blessed damozel leaned out
  From the gold bar of heaven;
Her eyes were deeper than the depth
  Of waters stilled at even;
She had three lilies in her hand,
  And the stars in her hair were seven.

. . . . . .

Her hair that lay along her back
  Was yellow like ripe corn.

. . . . . .

Beneath, the tides of day and night
  With flame and darkness ridge
The void, as low as where this earth
  Spins like a fretful midge.

. . . . . .

And the souls mounting up to God
  Went by her like thin flames.

. . . . . .

And still she bowed herself and stooped
  Out of the circling charm;
Until her bosom must have made
  The bar she leaned on warm,
And the lilies lay as if asleep
  Along her bended arm.

. . . . . .

The sun was gone now; the curled moon
  Was like a little feather
Fluttering far down the gulf.

. . . . . .

I'll take his hand and go with him
  To the deep wells of light;
As unto a stream we will step down,
  And bathe there in God's sight.

. . . . . .

We two will stand beside that shrine,
  Occult, withheld, untrod,
Whose lamps are stirred continually
  With prayer sent up to God;
And see our old prayers, granted, melt
  Each like a little cloud.

Given a compound of Poe and Shelley and Keats and Baudelaire and Vaughan, with an added element of a completely novel personality interfused through the whole, and you have a Dante Gabriel Rossetti. In his employment of parentheses and refrains Rossetti, like William Morris, sometimes irritates his readers by what seem to be mere affectations and mannerisms. To not a few, also, Rossetti's mysticism is far from pleasant, though this, be it said, is the weird moonlight flower whose roots struck into those shadowy deeps where lay united, not to be dissevered, the genius and the life of the man. Rossetti, with his mysticism eliminated, would have been another and, to one reader at least, a less pleasing Rossetti than the poet whom we know and have learned to love.

Let it not for a moment be supposed that

Rossetti's mystical tendencies froze within his bosom the kindly stream of human interest and fellowship. His heart ever beat in tune with the pulsations that stirred the common heart of the world. He was an admirer and defender of Robert Browning while as yet that great poet was generally unknown or was mentioned only in terms of ridicule and jest. He was characterized by a quick and generous appreciation of ability in others, and always stood ready in every possible manner to encourage struggling talent. Philip Bourke Marston, the blind poet, Oliver Madox Brown, our own Walt Whitman, and others shared the helpful interest which he manifested in his fellows of the pen and the palette. Rossetti preserved not a little of his boyish relish for fun nearly to the close of his life. In 1874 he writes to his brother William: "At present I am going about with a black patch over my nose. Last night Jenny *fille* and I agreed to shriek at the same moment, one 'Crupy' and the other 'Crawly,' in Dizzy's [the dog's] two ears, while May beat a tattoo on the top of his head. The instant result was that he turned round howling and bit me—fortunately not Jenny—across the nose, at which I am not surprised." A warm, full-blooded, abundant humanitarianism flows through many of Rossetti's lines, notably the poem entitled "Jenny," written before the poet had attained his majority, than which no more simple, natural, broadly philosophic production in verse, and none more fully embodying the spirit of the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, has been published within the present century. This poem enters into the discussion of a subject which few writers of prose or poetry would dare or care to undertake, namely, a courtesan who receives the visit of a man by night and who falls asleep upon his knee, thus arousing within him through "dead, unhappy hours" of watching reflections painful and pitiful to the last degree. The delicacy, the strength, the certainty of touch, the exquisite loveliness of this poem are beyond praise. Here, too, are memorable couplets, the grace, per-fume, and unexpectedness of which are like early violets in the young grass:

Poor handful of bright spring water
Flung in the whirlpool's shrieking face.

. . . . . .

But must your roses die, and those
Their purpled buds that should unclose?
Even so; the leaves are curled apart,
Still red as from the broken heart,
And here's the naked stem of thorns.

. . . . . .

The cold lamps at the pavement's edge
Wind on together and apart,
A fiery serpent for your heart.

. . . . . .

Like a toad within a stone
Seated while time crumbles on;
Which sits there since the earth was cursed
For man's transgression at the first;
Which, living through all centuries,
Not once has seen the sun arise;
Whose life, to its cold circle charmed,
The earth's whole summers have not warmed;
Which always—whitherso the stone
Be flung—sits there, deaf, blind, alone;—
Aye, and shall not be driven out
Till that which shuts him round about
Break at the very Master's stroke,
And the dust thereof vanish as smoke,
And the seed of man vanish as dust—
Even so within the world is lust.

As a writer of sonnets Dante Rossetti is well-nigh unequaled. Some of his sonnets written for pictures are nearly unapproachable in excellence, while the sonnet-sequence entitled "The House of Life" surpasses in richness, variety, and abounding vitality any other sonnet-sequence whatsoever, not excepting the "Sonnets from the Portuguese." Like a cleft pomegranate, this red-veined fruit of a fertile life, opened anywhere, shows the crimson heart within as the heart of a man. What treasures were buried from mortal delight in the poems interred in the same grave with the poet's dead wife, and afterward exhumed, these sonnets of "The House of Life" may reveal. Here is one, under the caption "Broken Music:"

The mother will not turn, who thinks she hears
Her nursling's speech first grow articulate;
But breathless, with averted eyes elate,
She sits, with open lips, and open ears,
That it may call her twice. 'Mid doubts and fears
Thus oft my soul has hearkened; till the song,
A central moan for days, at length found tongue,
And the sweet music welled and the sweet tears.

But now, whatever while the soul is fain
To list that wonted murmur, as it were
The speech-bound seashell's low, importunate
strains—
No breath of song, thy voice alone is there,
O bitterly beloved! and all her gain
Is but the pang of unpermitted prayer.

The manner in which Dante Rossetti formed the acquaintance of Miss Elizabeth Eleanor Siddal, the lady who afterward became his wife, is sufficiently romantic. Walter Howell Deverell, a young painter much liked, though not a member of the Preraphaelite Brotherhood, one day accompanied his mother to a bonnet shop in Cranborne Alley, and among the shop assistants saw a young woman handing down a bandbox. She was very beautiful, tall, finely molded, with a lofty neck and a wealth of coppery, golden hair. Deverell obtained the privilege of sittings from this lovely model, whom Rossetti soon after saw, admired, loved, and to whom he became engaged to be married. Miss Siddal herself developed artistic talents of no mean order. Of her Rossetti said: "Her fecundity of invention and facility are quite wonderful—much greater than mine." The single published specimen of her verses is very far from discreditable to her skill in this direction. "Guggum," "Guggums," and "Gug" seem to have been the whimsical, and not very euphonious, pet names which Rossetti applied to his fair one. Miss Siddal's health was extremely delicate, and she died of an overdose of laudanum in less than two years after her marriage with Rossetti in 1860.

It appears to be a well-established fact that from the year 1872 until the close of his life, in 1882, Rossetti was mentally unbalanced. The excessive use of chloral and whisky was probably contributory to, if it did not produce, this deplorable result. In the *Contemporary Review* for October, 1871, an article was published under the caption "The Fleshly School of Poetry—Mr. D. G. Rossetti." The article was signed by one Thomas Maitland. Not long thereafter it came to the knowledge of Rossetti that Thomas Maitland was none other than Mr. Robert Buchanan, the English poet, novelist, and essayist. The critique was unduly severe, and to Rossetti probably unjust. Mr. Buchanan has since retracted the strictures contained in the article, and in a manly way has expressed his high appreciation of Rossetti's work. But such was the mental and physical distemper of the unhappy artist that, upon the publication of Mr. Buchanan's criticism, his mental equilibrium was upset, and it was never again wholly restored. For years he was subject to delusions of the most painful character. Old friends were regarded as united in a conspiracy against him, and even strangers were accused of intentionally insulting him. When Mr. Browning's "Fifine at the Fair" was published Rossetti at once seized upon certain lines toward the close of the poem as containing a covert, but spiteful, attack upon himself. Mr. Dodgson (Lewis Carroll) wrote a nonsensical poem entitled "The Hunting of the Snark." This Rossetti also declared to be a pasquinade directed against his fair fame. Again, while at Broadlands, a friend's seat in Hampshire, Rossetti one day became greatly excited at a thrush singing in a neighboring garden, fancying that the bird had been trained by the enemies of his peace to "ejaculate something insulting to him." On still another occasion he suddenly left Kelmscott, where he had been sojourning for a season, having plunged into a quarrel with some anglers by the river, conceiving them to have uttered something derogatory to him. Yet through all this dark period he continued to paint and write with even more than his former skill and industry.

Rossetti's home for many years was at Tudor House, Chelsea. Here dwelt with him at one time Swinburne and George Meredith, and at a later date Hall Caine. Here, also, Rossetti gathered about him much old furniture and crockery, inaugurating the fashion of collecting bric-a-brac which so generally prevailed a few years ago. One charming trait of Rossetti's character appears in the tender and thoughtful affection which he ever cherished toward his mother. In his beautifully filial letters to her he again and again addresses her as "My Dearest Mother," and sometimes by the absurdly affectionate titles of "Teaksicunculum" and "Darling Teaksicum." He closes one epistle to his mother thus: "Take care of your dear, funny old self, and believe me your most loving son."

Rossetti's grave is at Birchington-on-Sea, where he closed his eyes on this world April 9, 1882. The tombstone, which is an Irish cross, was designed by Madox Brown. The inscription, written by William Michael Rossetti, is as follows:

> Here sleeps Gabriel Charles Dante Rossetti, honored, under the name of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, among painters as a painter, and among poets as a poet. Born in London, of parentage mainly Italian, 12 May, 1828. Died at Birchington, 9 April, 1882. This cruciform monument, bespoken by Dante Rossetti's mother, was designed by his lifelong friend Ford Madox Brown, executed by J. and H. Patteson, and erected by his brother William and sister Christina.

The world, so tardy to recognize, so slow to remember, its flame-winged ministers of song, will not consent to forget Dante Gabriel Rossetti. His clayey form has melted from human sight like a mist-born vision of the morning, but the breath of his genius still lingers to awaken music in rare and sensitive souls, as the wind murmurs through an Æolian harp. His memory shall not be as his own dissolving image, of which he sang in "Love's Nocturn:"

> Like a vapor wan and mute,
>   Like a flame, so let it pass;
> One low sigh across her lute,
>   One dull breath against her glass;
>   And to my sad soul, alas!
>   One salute
>   Cold as when death's foot shall pass.

No student of letters will need to be warned that popularity is not a test of excellence in the literary realm. Whatever may be said to the contrary, and however impotent we may be to define it in authentic terms, there is a recognized and permanent standard of taste and of ethics. To it is always made an unconscious appeal, for it is the product of genius striving to attain the ultimate ideals. Few or none who write for the applause of the current hour are likely to achieve this standard. Perhaps it is not too much to say that in their own day the books which become classics seldom challenge the attention of the multitudes.

In the poetry of Christina G. Rossetti may be clearly traced the austere beauty of a chaste and nun-like spirit. The poems of the brother and of the sister have very little in common except an underlying seriousness of purpose and an almost fastidious sense of melody. Christina's verse may be said to uniformly express the conflicts, the longings, and the aspirations of a deeply religious mind. Her treatment of pietistic themes is all her own, and it is astonishing what a varied music she is able to produce upon a single string. It cannot be doubted that, upon the whole, the sister's outlook upon life was saner than that of the brother, whose latter years were so sadly clouded by mental infirmity.

When, a few years ago, the voice of Christina Rossetti sank into the hush of death, England lost her sweetest songstress since Mrs. Browning sent up her swan-notes beneath Italian skies. Undoubtedly the contact into which Christina was brought with the clever young men who were the associates of her brothers, as recorded in the two goodly volumes containing the memoir and family letters of Dante Rossetti, aided her not a little in the development of her intellectual life. She seemed easily to command all the melodious resources of which our language is capable. "Goblin Market" is a bizarre fantasy wrought out with utmost adroitness, the lesson of which seems to be contained in the closing lines:

> For there is no friend like a sister,
> In calm or stormy weather,
> To cheer one on the tedious way,
> To fetch one if one goes astray,
> To lift one if one totters down,
> To strengthen whilst one stands.

But it is in her lyrics that she is preeminent. The dewy freshness and simplicity of such a song as that beginning,

My heart is like a singing bird
  Whose nest is in a watered shoot,

well illustrate the lark-like quality of Miss Rossetti's notes. "Another Spring," and the song "When I Am Dead, My Dearest," are all but flawless in their way. How sweet and graceful are her strains the last mentioned lyric well attests:

When I am dead, my dearest,
  Sing no sad song for me;
Plant thou no roses at my head,
  Nor shady cypress tree:
Be the green grass above me
  With showers and dewdrops wet;
And if thou wilt, remember,
  And if thou wilt, forget.

I shall not see the shadows,
  I shall not feel the rain;
I shall not hear the nightingale
  Sing on, as if in pain:
And, dreaming through the twilight
  That doth not rise nor set,
Haply I may remember,
  And haply may forget.

Miss Rossetti's devotional pieces are shot through and through with the lovely fancies and exalted symbolisms of the genuine poet. Unlike most religious verse, hers is lifted far above the dreariness and commonplaces of mediocrity. Her own intense individuality informs every stanza, almost every line. Here is a brief poem entitled "Weary in Well-doing:"

I would have gone; God bade me stay:
  I would have worked; God bade me rest.
He broke my will from day to day,
  He read my yearnings unexpressed,
    And said them nay.

Now I would stay; God bids me go:
  Now I would rest; God bids me work.
He breaks my heart tossed to and fro,
  My soul is wrung with doubts that lurk
    And vex it so.

I go, Lord, where thou sendest me;
  Day after day I plod and moil:
But, Christ my God, when will it be
  That I may let alone my toil,
    And rest with thee?

In the Preface to the recent volume, *New Poems by Christina Rossetti,* her brother, William Michael Rossetti, has recorded the curious fact that, notwithstanding the intimacy of their home life and the large amount of verse which Christina has left to the world, he never saw his sister in the act of composition.

These observations concerning this songful twain may not be further prolonged. They lived and sang through their allotted years, and their songs are yet with us. Let us be grateful for them. Now that the singers are beyond the reach of human blame or blessing, hands are not lacking to weave chaplets of praise wherewith to adorn their tombs. Slow, too slow, is this old world to learn the oft-repeated lesson that the words of panegyric uttered above unconscious dust are as idle and ineffectual as the wind that bears them away. If the dead could be reached by the joys or sorrows of the living, many a heart misjudged and broken, which, despairing, has ceased to beat, would, amid its solemn shadows, be filled with gladness and perpetual peace. Let us hope that the following sonnet, one of Miss Rossetti's best, may not be altogether wide of a precious possibility:

The curtains were half drawn, the floor was swept
  And strewn with rushes, rosemary and may
  Lay thick upon the bed on which I lay,
Where through the lattice ivy-shadows crept.
He leaned above me, thinking that I slept
  And could not hear him; but I heard him say,
  "Poor child, poor child!" and as he turned away
Came a deep silence, and I knew he wept.
He did not touch the shroud, or raise the fold
  That hid my face, or take my hand in his,
    Or ruffle the smooth pillows for my head:
    He did not love me living; but once dead
  He pitied me; and very sweet it is
To know he still is warm, though I am cold.

VI

THE CORRESPONDENCE OF JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

12

VI

THE CORRESPONDENCE OF JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

It has been said that the days of the art of letter writing are forever past; that the telephone, the telegraph, the typewriter, and the modern newspaper have reduced the epistles that pass between friends to the exchange of the merest conventional civilities. In these strenuous and rushing years little opportunity is found to enjoy the pleasant and gossipy leisureliness of the old-time letter writers. The letters of Cowper, of Dean Swift, of Keats, of Landor, of Carlyle, and his brilliant wife, of Emerson, of the two Brownings, and, we might add, of R. L. Stevenson will never be duplicated, because *tempora mutantur, et nos mutamur in illis*. And yet, down to the very year of his death, the letters of Lowell were the same delightful, lucid, and witty expressions of a charming personality. In them are quaint bits of observation, wise and incisive comments upon men and things, sudden revelations of a heart overflowing with love, passages as bright with humor as anything that appears in the *Moosehead Journal,* erudite allusions, and quotations from the most diverse sources, until it would seem that the advent of one of these letters must have been marked as an important event in the experience of the recipient.

James Russell Lowell first opened his eyes to the light of the natural sun in Cambridge, Mass., on February 22, 1819, a day noted in the calendar of American patriotism as the one made memorable by the nativity of the immortal Washington. Lowell was most fortunate in his antecedents. His father was a cultured clergyman, a lover of books and of the benign and beautiful things of life. The poet's mother was of an ancient Orkney family, and through her were filtered into the blood of the son the solitude and romantic mystery of those northern islands. Lowell's early home was such as would foster the poetic instincts of a child. Elmwood, a product of colonial times, stood in the midst of lawn and garden, orchard and English elms. It was a roomy old-fashioned house, rising amid its rural surroundings, with an air of quiet respectability all its own. There were five other children in the Lowell household, three brothers and two sisters, all older than the poet. He was an ardent little fellow, loving boyish pastimes, and was happy and healthy in affections and temperament as a boy should be. We may obtain a glimpse of his joyous childhood from the following letter to his brother Robert, written seventy-one years ago:

My Dear Brother,—I am now going to tell you melancholy news. I have got the ague together with a gumbile. I presume you know that September has got a lame leg, but he grows better every day and now is very well but still limps a little. We have a new scholar from round hill. his name is Hooper and we expect another named Penn who I believe also comes from there. The boys are all very well except Nemaise, who has got another piece of glass in his leg and is waiting for the doctor to take it out, and Samuel Storrow is also sick. I am going to have a new suit of blue broadcloth clothes to wear every day and to play in. Mother tells me that I may have any sort of buttons I choose. I have not done anything to the hut but if you wish I will. I am now very happy; but I should be more so if you were there. I hope you will answer my letter if you do not I shall write you no more letters. when you write my letters you must direct them all to me and not write half to mother as generally do. Mother has given me three volumes of tales of a grandfather.

farewell Yours truly

James R. Lowell.

You must excuse me for making so many mistakes. You must keep what I have told you about my new clothes a secret if you dont I shall not divulge any more secrets to you. I have got quite a library. The Master has not taken his rattan out since the vacation. Your little kitten is as well and as playful as ever and I hope you are to for I am sure I love you as well as ever. Why is grass like a mouse you cant guess that he he he ho ho ho ha ha ha hum hum hum.

Lowell matriculated at Harvard as a freshman, when he was fifteen years of age. Although somewhat diffident, he made friends among his classmates, and found much enjoyment in his college days. In a letter written to W. H. Shackford, in

1836, the critical habit of Lowell's mind already begins to appear. He says:

> I am reading the life of Milton, and find it very interesting; his first taste (as well as Cowley's) for poetry was formed by reading Spenser. I am glad to have such good examples, for Spenser was always my favorite poet. I like the meter of the "Faerie Queene;" Beattie's "Minstrel" is in the same. Apropos of poetry, I myself (you need not turn up your nose and grin)—yes, I myself have cultivated the muses, and have translated one or two odes from Horace, your favorite Horace. I like Horace much, but prefer Virgil's "Bucolics" to his "Odes," most of them. If you have your Horace by you, turn to the IXth Satire, 1st Book, and read it, and see if you don't like it (in an expurgated edition).

In a letter to G. B. Loring, written in the same year as the foregoing, we have another allusion to the fact that he has begun the writing of poetry:

> Here I am, alone in Bob's room with a blazing fire, in an atmosphere of "poesy" and soft-coal smoke. Hope, Dante, a few of the older English poets, Byron, and last, not least, some of my own compositions, lie around me. Mark my modesty. I don't put myself in the same line with the rest, you see.

Writing to W. H. Shackford the following year, he gives apparently the first intimation of what his pursuit in life shall be: "I thought your brother Charles was studying law. I intend to study that myself, and probably shall be Chief Justice of the United States."

That dominant love for the home of his birth and childhood, which made Lowell cling to Elmwood to the closing day of his life, he expresses in another letter to Loring, penned April 5, 1837:

> To revisit the home of one's childhood has much of joy, but it is a joy mingled with sadness. To think how soon those flowers that have bloomed, those fields that have smiled, and those trees that have so often arrayed themselves in "summer's garb" for you, may bloom and smile and array themselves for another! You may think me a fool to talk in such a moralizing strain, but, George, I have lately talked less and thought more. I mean to read next term, if possible, a chapter in my Bible every night.

The increasingly studious habits of his mind and that *bonhomie* which were characteristic of Lowell throughout his later life are now (1837) well defined.

> I am busy as a bee—almost. I study and read and write all the time. I have laid my hands on a very pretty edition of Cowper, which I intend to keep. In two volumes I have also "pinned" some letters relating to myself in my early childhood, by which it seems I was a miracle of a boy for sweetness of temper. "*Credite posteri!*" I believe I was, although perhaps you would not think it now.

Already, in this same year, he begins to find himself able to express his intense love of nature:

> You can't imagine how delightful it is out here. The greatest multitude of birds of every description that I ever recollect to have seen. The grass is fast growing green under the kind sun of spring—that is, in southerly aspects. Every day that the sun shines I take my book and go out to a bank in our garden, and lie and read. 'Tis almost as pleasant as
>
> To sit on rocks, to muse o'er flood and fell.
>
> . . . The birds now sing loudest, and the fowling piece breaks "the quiet of the scene" less often than at any other time. Besides, 'tis beautiful to watch the different steps of nature's toilet, as she arrays herself in the flowery dress of Spring. It almost seems as if one could see the grass grow green. Then, too, the sky is so clear.

Years after this expression of his love for nature, Lowell wrote in the same spirit as follows:

> The older I grow the more I am convinced that there are no satisfactions so deep and so permanent as our sympathies with outward nature. I have not said just what I meant, for we are thrilled even more by any spectacle of human heroism. But the others seem to bind our lives together by a more visible and unbroken chain of purifying and softening emotion. In this way the flowering of the buttercups is always a great, and I may truly say religious, event in my year. . . . There never was such a season, if one only did not have to lecture and write articles. There never is such a season, and that shows what a poet God is. He says the same thing over to us so often, and always new. Here I've been reading the same poem for nearly half a century, and never had a notion what the buttercups in the third stanza meant before. But I won't tell.

In one of his early letters, written while he is rusticating in Concord for having neglected certain studies of the college curriculum, he thus mentions Thoreau: "I met Thoreau last night, and it is exquisitely amusing to see how he imitates Emerson's tone and manner. With my eyes shut, I shouldn't know them apart."

The decidedly poetical bias of Lowell's nature is now clearly apparent. "I have been reading the first volume of Carlyle's

Miscellanies," he writes. "One article, that on Burns, is worth all the rest to me. I like, too, the one on German playwrights. There are fine passages in all." About this time there was some thought upon the part of the poet of entering a divinity school, that he might prepare himself for the ministry. He seems to have been possessed of very distinct notions with regard to a clergyman's condition as related to his work, and reached the conclusion that he was not adapted to the minister's vocation. He says:

> No man ought to be a minister who has not a special calling that way. I don't mean an old-fashioned special calling, with winged angels and fat-bottomed cherubs, but an inward one. In fact, I think that no man ought to be a minister who has not money enough to support him besides his salary. For the minister of God should not be thinking of his own and children's bread, when dispensing the bread of life. I have been led to reflect seriously on the subject since I have thought of going into the divinity school. Some men were made for peacemakers and others for shoemakers, and if each man follow his nose we shall come out right at last. If I did not think that I should some day make a great fool of myself and marry (not that I would call all

men fools who marry), I would enter the school to-morrow. Certain am I that it is not pleasant to work for a living anyway, but "we youth" must live, and verily this "money" is a very good thing, though on that account we need not fall down and worship it. The very cent on which my eye now rests may have done a great deal of good in its day; perhaps it has made glad the heart of the widow, and put a morsel of bread in the famishing mouths of her children; and perhaps it has created much misery; perhaps some now determined gambler began his career of sin by playing chuck-farthing with that very piece of stamped copper.

In this same letter his burning love of liberty, which seemed to intensify with passing years, obtains a tentative utterance that came to its culmination long afterward in the noble "Commemoration Ode:"

A plan has been running in my head, for some time, of writing a sort of dramatic poem on the subject of Cromwell. Those old Roundheads have never had justice done them. They have only been held up as canting, psalm-singing, hypocritical rascals; as a sort of a foil for the open-hearted Cavalier. But it were a strange thing indeed if there were not somewhat in such men as Milton, Sidney, Hampden, Selden and Pym. It always struck me that there was more true poetry in those old fiery-eyed, buff-belted warriors—with their deep, holy enthusiasm for liberty and democracy, political and religious;

with their glorious trust in the arm of the Lord in battle—than in the dashing, ranting Cavaliers, who wished to restore their king that they might give vent to their passions, and go to sleep again in the laps of their mistresses, deaf to the cries of the poor and the oppressed.

After the final relinquishment of his nascent purpose of entering the ministry Lowell turned his attention to the study of law, but only at intervals and in a desultory and half-hearted manner. He says:

> I am reading Blackstone with as good a grace and as few wry faces as I may. . . . A very great change has come o'er the spirit of my dream of life. I have renounced the law. I am going to settle down into a business man at last, after all I have said to the contrary. Farewell! a long farewell, to all my greatness! I find that I cannot bring myself to like the law, and I am now looking out for a place "in a store." You may imagine that all this has not come to pass without a struggle. . . . I have been thinking seriously of the ministry, but then—I have also thought of medicine, but then—still worse! . . . On Monday last I went into town to look out for a place, and was induced *en passant* to step into the United States Court, where there was a case pending in which Webster was one of the counsel retained. I had not been there an hour before I determined to continue in my profession and study as well as I could.

The vacillation of Lowell's mind at this period with regard to his life pursuit is well portrayed by the foregoing quotations. The poet's interest in matters of public concern had already been kindled, although he was still ineligible to vote, not yet having come of age. In view of the *Biglow Papers* and their influence upon their time, and also of Lowell's brilliant career as the representative of his country at the Spanish court and at the Court of St. James, some of the lines in a letter written November 15, 1838, seem to be almost prophetic:

> I shouldn't wonder if the peaceable young gentleman whom you know in college flared up into a great political luminary. I am fast becoming ultra-democratic, and when I come to see you, which I trust will be very soon, I intend to inoculate you with the (I won't call it by the technical term of "virus," because that's too hard a word, but with the) principle. . . . By the very last accounts from England, immense meetings have been held in all parts of England to petition Parliament for an equal representation. . . . There is a great and pregnant change, ominous of much. It almost brings tears into my eyes when I think of this vast multitude starved, trampled upon, meeting to petition the government which oppressed them, and which they supported by

> taxes wrung out of the very children's lifeblood. Verily, some enthusiasts have even ventured to assert that there are hearts, aye, even warm ones, under frieze jerkins.

Again Lowell swings toward the law, with the pathetic tergiversation characteristic of so many young men groping toward their lifework. In these days of large prices for famous names and commonplace performances, it is rather wholesome to note the highest fees to which Lowell aspired in payment for a lecture:

> The more I think of business, the more really unhappy do I feel and think more and more of studying law. In your letter you speak of my lecturing in Andover, about which I forgot to speak to you. Do they pay expenses? They gave me four dollars in Concord. I wish they'd take it into their heads to ask me at Cambridge, where they pay fifteen dollars, or in Lowell, where they pay twenty-five dollars! What to do with myself I don't know.

Lowell had been accused of indolence by his friends. The accusation seems to have had a basis of fact, and the poet himself recognized it. Yet it has ever been so with those possessed of poetical genius; it comes to its best only in that atmosphere of leisureliness and contentment wherein indeed the

. . . Spirit lies
Under the walls of Paradise.

Here is the young writer's confession: "I am lazy enough and dilatory enough, heaven knows, but not half so much so as some of my friends suppose. At all events, I was never made for a merchant, and I even begin to doubt whether I was made for anything in particular but to loiter through life."

In view of the eagerness with which publishers afterward sought the work of Lowell's pen, the desire expressed to publish a volume of his poems is curiously striking:

> If I could get any bookseller to do it for me, I would publish a volume of poems. Of late a fancy has seized me for so doing. If it met with any commendation I could get paid for contributions to periodicals. I tried last night to write a little rhyme—but must wait for the moving of the waters. The nine goddess virgins who dance with tender feet round the violet-hued fountain of Hippocrene, and whose immortal voices drop sweetly from their lips, will not come to me.

Apropos of his relation to the law he writes again, in 1839:

> If I live, I don't believe I shall ever (between you and me) practice law. I intend, however, to study it and prepare myself for practicing. But a blind presentiment of becoming independent in some other way is always hovering round me. Above all things should I love to be able to sit down and do something literary for the rest of my natural life.

The first mention of Miss Maria White, afterward Mrs. Lowell, we find in a letter addressed by Lowell to G. B. Loring, and bearing date December 2, 1839:

> I went up to Watertown on Saturday with W. A. White and spent the Sabbath with him. You ought to see his father. The most perfect specimen of a bluff, honest, hospitable country squire you can possibly imagine. His mother, too, is a very pleasant woman—a sister of Mrs. Gilman. His sister is a very pleasant and pleasing young lady, and knows more poetry than anyone I am acquainted with. I mean she is able to repeat more. She is more familiar, however, with modern poets than with the pure wellsprings of English poesy.

Lowell completed his studies at the Harvard Law School in 1840, receiving the degree of Bachelor of Laws. His father had suffered financial reverses, and the poet now found himself confronted with the necessity of earning his own livelihood. In these straits, as other good men have done in all ages, Lowell became engaged to be married. Miss Maria White was a woman of uncommon personal attractiveness, and her mental endowments were of a high order. She, too, wrote poetry, and thus was peculiarly fitted to sympathize with the tastes and aspirations of her gifted husband. About this time Lowell concluded to collect his poems for publication, which he did under the title of *A Year's Life.* The little book at once gave its author an assured place among his younger poetical compeers. Lowell published his second volume of verse in 1843, and this second venture afforded indubitable evidence of maturing power. In 1844 Lowell published a volume of prose consisting of *Conversations on Some of the Old Poets.* The critical and analytical bent of his mind was now well determined, and the work in this book already showed elements of future power. At the close of this year Lowell married, despite his very limited and precarious income. He began to write for antislavery organs, and, being deeply moved by the noblest humanitarian instincts, he gave utterance week after week to sentiments that stirred like a bugle blast. Thus the *Biglow Papers* began to appear, and were at once received with an expression of popular favor which has never changed. In 1848 they were issued in a volume, and in the same year the *Fable for Critics* and the *Vision of Sir Launfal* were written and published.

The fugitive ideal—we have sought to capture it, but it has still eluded our uttermost cunning. We have caught a fleeting glimpse of its loveliness—a splendor flashed for an instant upon our eyes—and our hearts forever after have known a vague unrest. Sometimes we have turned our weary eyes toward a smiling height, and have seen a shadowy hand beckoning us thither. Our lives may have been empty of some longed-for satisfactions, but we, too, have had our starry moments—our pregnant intimations of at least one glorious possibility whose whispers we have heard. It was so with our poet. The growing temper of his mind is well illustrated by the following lines which appear in letters written in 1841:

> I know that God has given me powers such as are not given to all, and I will not "hide my talent in mean clay." I do not care what others may think of me or of my book, because if I am worth anything I shall one day show it. I do not fear criticism so much as I love truth. Nay, I do not fear it at all. In short, I am happy. Maria fills my ideal, and I satisfy hers. And I mean to live as one beloved by such a woman should live. She is every way noble. People have called "Irene" a beautiful piece of poetry. And so it is. It owes all its beauty to her. . . . I have just finished something which I ought to have done long ago. I have copied off a ballad of mine for a publisher of the name of D. H. Williams, who is getting out an annual. He will pay me five dollars per page, and more if the book sells well. Hawthorne, Emerson, and Longfellow are writing for it, and Bryant and Halleck have promised to—so I shall be in good company, which will be pleasing to groundlings.

At times Lowell bubbled over with fun and animal spirits; he would then pour out sufficient original wit and humor to have supplied a professional humorist with a working capital for several years:

> The next day I was up before sunrise, and got into a habit of early rising that lasted me all that day. . . . I have nothing else in the way of novelty, except an expedient I hit upon for my hens who were backward with their eggs. On rainy days I set William to reading aloud to them the *Lay Sermons* of Coleridge, and the effect was magical. Whether their consciences were touched or they wished to escape the preaching, I know not. . . . I take great comfort in God. I think he is considerably amused with us sometimes, but that he likes us, on the whole, and would not let us get at the match box so carelessly as he does unless he knew that the frame of his universe was fireproof. . . . As usual I haven't left myself time to correct my proofs. What a pleasant life I shall have of it when I have all eternity on deposit. Then the printers will say, "If you can with convenience return proofs before end of next century, you would oblige; but there is no hurry." 'Tis an invincible argument for immortality that we never have time enough here—except for doing other things.

Again and again Lowell reveals the extreme affectionateness of his nature:

> You say that life seems to be a struggle after nothing in particular. But you are wrong. It is a struggle after the peaceful home of the soul in a natural

> and loving state of life. Men are mostly unconscious of the object of their struggle, but it is always connected in some way with this. If they gain wealth and power or glory, it is all to make up for this want, which they feel, but scarce know what it is. But nothing will ever supply the place of this, any more than their softest carpets will give their old age the spring and ease which arose from the pliant muscles of youth. . . . It is always my happiest thought that with all the drawbacks of temperament (of which no one is more keenly conscious than myself) I have never lost a friend. For I would rather be loved than anything else in the world. I always thirst after affection, and depend more on the expression of it than is altogether wise.

The strongly altruistic tendencies of Lowell's mind are observable in the views which he expressed upon the question of slavery:

> If men will not set their faces against this monstrous sin, this *choragus* of all other enormities, they, at least, need not smile upon it, much less write in its favor. What, in the name of God, are all these paltry parties, which lead men by the nose against all that is best and holiest, to the freedom of five millions of men? The horror of slavery can only be appreciated by one who has felt it himself, or who has imagination enough to put himself in the place of the slave and fancy himself not only virtually imprisoned, but forced to toil; and all this for no crime

and for no reason except that it would be inconvenient to free them.

That Lowell was possessed of a deeply spiritual nature none who are well acquainted with his writings will be disposed to deny. He seemed to be always conscious of the divine Immanence, and undoubtedly the sense of God's presence and overruling providence lent grandeur and dignity to his thought and life. He says:

> I had a revelation last Friday evening. I was at Mary's, and happening to say something of the presence of spirits (of whom, I said, I was often dimly aware), Mr. Putnam entered into an argument with me on spiritual matters. As I was speaking, the whole system rose up before me like a vague destiny looming from the abyss. I never before so clearly felt the spirit of God in me and around me. The whole room seemed to me full of God. The air seemed to waver to and fro with the presence of something, I knew not what. I spoke with the calmness and clearness of a prophet.

In his young manhood Lowell was filled with the fine and brave enthusiasms of youth. His wings were light and strong, and to him no height seemed beyond his reach. His buoyant spirits responded swiftly to every change for the better in the material circumstances of his life. He looked upon his conquest of the world as already assured, and the event proved the justice of his judgment:

> I have set about making myself ambitious. It is the only way to climb well. Men yield more readily to an ambitious man, provided he can bear it out by deeds. Just as much as we claim the world gives us, and posterity has enough to do in nailing the base coin to the counter. But I only mean to use my ambition as a staff to my love of freedom and man. I will have power, and there's the end of it. I have a right to it, too, and you see I have put the crown on already.

To the bereaved friend the poet, who himself had lost a darling child, and who was again to pass through the swelling of the great waters, thus addresses himself concerning death and sorrow:

> I agree entirely with what you have said of death in your last letter; but at the same time I know well that the first touch of his hand is cold, and that he comes to us, as the rest of God's angels do, in disguise. But we are enabled to see his face fully at last, and it is that of a seraph. So it is with all. Disease, poverty, death, sorrow all come to us with unbenign countenances; but from one after another

the mask falls off, and we behold faces which retain the glory and the calm of having looked in the face of God. To me, at least, your bereavement has come with the softest step and the most hallowed features, for it has opened a new channel for my love to flow toward you in. . . . It is therefore no idle form when I tell you to lean on God. I know that it is needless to say this to you, but I know also that it is always sweet and consoling to have our impulses seconded by the sympathy of our friends.

We all are tall enough to reach God's hand,
The angels are no taller.

I could not restrain my tears when I read what you say of the living things all around the cast mantle of your child. It is strange, almost awful, that, when this great miracle has been performed for us, nature gives no sign. Not a bee stints his hum, the sun shines, the leaves glisten, the cock crow comes from the distance, the flies buzz into the room, and yet perhaps a minute before the most immediate presence of God of which we can conceive was filling the whole chamber, and opening its arms to "suffer the little ones to come unto him."

The filial love and reverence that a child owes to a worthy parent Lowell has expressed in lines which fairly throb with warm and deep affection. His portrait of his father is as unstudied as it is delightful. The manner in which scholars gather knowledge by processes of accretion Lowell has indicated with his accustomed freshness and originality:

> If you had cast about for a hard question to ask me, you could not have been more successful than in desiring my advice as to a course of reading. I suppose that very few men who are bred scholars ever think of such a thing as a course of reading after their Freshman year in college. Their situation throws books constantly in their way, and they select by a kind of instinct the food which will suit their mental digestion, acquiring knowledge insensibly, as the earth gathers soil. This was wholly the case with myself.

Having been taken to task for entertaining the principles of an abolitionist, and in like manner having been accused of one-sidedness, Lowell thus proceeds to defend himself:

> There is one abolitionist, at least, who seldom lets slip any opportunity against any institution which seems to him to stand in the way of freedom. Absolute freedom is what I want—for the body first, and then for the mind. For the body first, because it is easier to make men conscious of the wrong of that grosser and more outward oppression, and, after seeing that, they will perceive more readily the less palpable chains and gags of tyranny.

That erratic, irresponsible, iconoclastic free lance of letters, Edgar Allan Poe, who ran atilt at most of his fellow-writers in his own day, did not permit Lowell to escape. In common with Longfellow and others already eminent in literature, Poe accused Lowell of plagiarism. Lowell thus repels the charge:

> Poe, I am afraid, is wholly lacking in that element of manhood which, for want of a better name, we call "character." It is something quite distinct from genius—though all great geniuses are endowed with it. . . . As I prognosticated, I have made Poe my enemy by doing him a service. Poe wishes to kick down the ladder by which he rose. He is welcome. But he does not attack me at a weak point. He probably cannot conceive of anybody's writing for anything but a newspaper reputation, or for posthumous fame, which is but the same thing magnified by distance. I have quite other aims.

In this same letter, from which the foregoing quotation is made, Lowell permits us to look for a moment into the depths of his heart, where he reveals his intense longing for sympathy and love. Could we gaze below the cold exterior of many a person whose pathway for an instant crosses our own, we doubtless would be astonished to learn how, in the largest and purest natures, this yearning for human fellowship rises into a very passion. Lowell's conception of the office of a poet was a lofty one. His charming and beautiful prose did not possess in his own eyes a hundredth part of the value of his poetry. His desire was to live and be remembered by what he had done in the poetic field. He was conscious of his high calling, and attained to rare moments of prophetic power and vicarious suffering:

> My calling is clear to me. I am never lifted up to any peak of vision—and moments of almost fearful inward illumination I have sometimes—but that, when I look down in hope to see some valley of the Beautiful Mountains, I behold nothing but blackened ruins; and the moans of the downtrodden the world over—but chiefly here in our own land—come up to my ear, instead of the happy songs of the husbandmen reaping and binding the sheaves of light; yet these, too, I hear not seldom. Then I feel how great is the office of poet, could I but even dare to hope to fill it.

The mutual helpfulness which lies at the foundation of all true democracy is not always recognized, particularly by those who, because of birth, training, and education, should be first to embody in their own lives the fact that *noblesse oblige.* But with Lowell democracy in its widest and truest sense was almost a religion. All great genius has been allied with a youthful temperament that never aged. In fact, genius itself, as a subtle prophylactic against time, is a preservative of the simple beliefs, elasticity, and fire of youth, to which the vision of the world is ever fair and bright. Whatever epigraphs time may score upon the brow, or howsoever upon hollow temples he may dust his rime, genius permits no wrinkles to come upon the heart. The selfsame hopefulness and high-heartedness of early years are borne lightly onward to the very end of life. It was so with Lowell.

How much a matter of conscience Lowell's antislavery sentiments were may be discovered from the fact that he was reluctant to receive money for the articles which he produced in behalf of the cause so dear to his heart. Whatever the acknowledged charms of Lowell the author—and they are many—they were eclipsed by the charming personality of Lowell the man. It should ever be thus. The writer who is not greater than his writings is a kind of impostor, for he creates in the minds of others a false conception of himself. That Lowell never lost a friend who really knew him need not be regarded as surprising. "If I did not think that I were better than my books," he says, "I should never dream of writing another." He cherished a perpetual and consuming desire to fulfill the expectations of his friends. He knew that they anticipated great things for him, and he set about to realize these anticipations. At the same time he felt that his poetical power and skill were increasing, and he looked into the future with the resilience of hope based upon praiseworthy performance. His never-failing kindliness of heart and invincible good humor helped him over not a few of the rough places of life. He was able to see the humorous side of almost every situation, so that difficulties which would have dismayed many another man were for him minified to the vanishing point. Nor was he afraid of dealing with some of the most perplexing of the ethical problems of the world. He looked upon human nature with a clear and tolerant eye, and he never despaired of the ultimate elevation of humanity. His attitude toward the Author of the Christian faith was one of deepest reverence and unchanging love.

Death was not idle in the poet's life. His dear children were taken from him, one by one—with the exception of his daughter Mabel—and all too soon his beautiful and beloved wife. In the loss of the latter Lowell drank of the bitterest cup that can be pressed to the lips of man. She was a fragile creature of fire and dew, and the end approached so insidiously under cover of a constitutional delicacy of health that it took the poet by a heartbreaking surprise. This great sorrow wore him down, but his faith and resignation rose triumphant above the affliction.

In the opening months of 1855 he was elected to a professorship in Harvard College—a chair which had previously been occupied by Ticknor and Longfellow. Lowell entered upon the duties of his new position on his return from Europe, in 1856. He continued in this relation for twenty years. In 1857 he also became editor of the *Atlantic Monthly,* "sitting in the seat of the scorner," as he expressed it, for four consecutive years. At the end of this period he became associated with Charles Eliot Norton in the joint editorship of the *North American Review.* During the soul-trying years of our civil war his was a puissant voice lifted in defense of the Union. The mounting fire and passion of his patriotism culminated in the splendid "Commemoration Ode," which seems to have been written with his very heart's blood. Lowell was always pleased at any recognition of his work as a poet. He felt that he had in him all the elements of the highest poetical achievements, and in consequence looked with a certain dissatisfaction upon his best productions as falling far below his own ideal of excellence and of possibility. He was always conscious, also, notwithstanding the general buoyancy of his nature, that upon him, as upon all great sensitive souls, pressed the inescapable *weltschmerz* which haunts these years of time.

Many of Lowell's utterances might pass current as proverbs, so trenchant are they and bite with such power into the memory:

> He cannot be a wise man who never says a foolish thing, and, indeed, I go further, and affirm that it takes a wise man to say a foolish thing. . . . We never find out on how many insignificant points we have fastened the subtile threads of association—which is almost love with sanguine temperaments—till we are forced to break them. . . . We shall never feather our nests from the eagles we have let fly. . . . It is splendid, as girls say, to dream backward so. One feels as if he were a poet, and one's own Odyssey sings itself in one's blood as he walks. . . . What a web a man can spin out of his life, if a man be only a genius. . . . I have discovered that it is almost impossible to learn all about anything unless indeed it be some piece of ill-luck, and then one has the help of one's friends. . . . But let us have a cheerful confidence that we are worth damning, for that implies a chance also of something better. . . . I believe it one of the most happy things

in the world, as we grow older, to have as many ties as possible with whatever is best in our own past, and to be pledged as deeply as may be to our own youth. . . . That friendship should be able to endure silence without suspicion is the surest touchstone of its sufficiency. . . . I have always believed that a man's fate is born with him, and that he cannot escape from it nor greatly modify it—and that consequently everyone gets in the long run exactly what he deserves, neither more nor less. . . . If a man does anything good, the world always finds it out, sooner or later, and if he doesn't, why, the world finds that out, too—and ought to. . . . Women need social stimulus more than we [men]. They contribute to it more, and their magnetism, unless drawn off by the natural conductors, turns inward and irritates. . . . I look upon a belief as none the worse, but rather the better, for being hereditary, prizing as I do whatever helps to give continuity to the being and doing of man and an accumulated force to his character. . . . They go about to prove to me from a lot of nasty savages that conscience is a purely artificial product, as if that wasn't the very wonder of it. What odds whether it is the thing or the aptitude that is innate? What race of beasts ever got one up in all their leisurely æons? . . . I don't care where the notion of immortality came from. If it sprang out of a controlling necessity of our nature, some instinct of self-protection and preservation, like the color of some of Darwin's butterflies, at any rate it is there and as real as that, and I mean to hold it fast.

The unfolding of a commanding intellect always presents a fascinating study, and hence the writer of these lines has purposely lingered over the earlier portion of Lowell's life as we find it expressed in his letters. His high place as a poet is so widely recognized that no words in emphasis of that fact are needed now. As a critic he brought to bear upon his task a kindly disposition, a culture broad and exact, and a catholicity of taste equaled only by the acumen of his mind. His perception of high qualities seemed to be instinctive. The slashing, swashbuckling style of criticism which prevailed about the middle of the present century Lowell wholly eschewed, and perhaps for the first time on this side of the Atlantic there was apparent an earnest and painstaking effort to ascertain the real content of a piece of literary art. Over all his writing, likewise, in whatever kind, there played an ever various and subtle humor like iridescent light.

VII

THE LETTERS OF ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

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We have fallen upon an age of notes and notelets. The old leisureliness requisite for the cultivation of the epistolary art is ours no longer. The demon of haste lurks at our elbow, and we no longer take time to observe the amenities of friendship. In days that are past a letter was at once a news-sheet, a record of mental taste and delight, and a flashing mirror of the heart. Every word exhaled an aroma of personality. Now we receive a few type-written lines of colorless language, and we must accept them forsooth as a letter. Yet these latter years have not been wholly devoid of the kindly instincts of the genuine letter-writer; and when we turn to the correspondence of Lowell, the Brownings, Dante Rossetti, and Robert Louis Stevenson it is like breathing again the atmosphere in which Keats, Cowper, Schiller, and Lamb indited letters with a pen dipped in their own hearts.

It is posterity that pronounces final judgment upon a writer. He may fill a large and unique place among his contemporaries, and seem to the eyes that look upon his own day as destined to a seat among the immortals, but it is those who come after him to whom is committed the ultimate adjudication of his claims to remembrance. The writer who lacks vitality and a fecund and fertilizing power over others will, immediately that death has vindicated his universal sway, quietly slip into the limbo of forgetfulness. But he in whose veins life warms and riots, who makes his pages breathe with a full and healthy scope, who appeals to the fundamental instincts and loves of humankind, may falter for a little while in his march toward the Pantheon of perpetual renown, but sooner or later he assuredly arrives.

Robert Louis Stevenson was an artist, curious and delightful, dealing with his subjects in the fresh, joyous, and zestful manner in which an active-minded boy inspects each new object that comes within the radius of his experience. In fact, as a writer, Stevenson's brave and sunny juvenescence is one of his most charming traits. In his works he shines forth in many characters; he is a moralist—sometimes of the grave-digger type—a poet, a humorist, a Bohemian, an adventurer, a buccaneer, a prince, a beggar, a historian, a traveler, a chronicler of everyday events, a hater of falsehoods and shams. He has a clear and forthright way of telling a story, though in him the dreamer is strangely united with the man of action. A singular intimacy broods over his pages, so that he takes at once into his confidence those who will listen, however briefly, to his words. He loved to deal with the elemental passions and qualities of humankind, as witness Herrick's struggle against moral decadence, and Davis's redemption to righteousness, in *The Ebb Tide*, or the conflict arising in the dual nature of every man as portrayed in *The*

Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. He did not tamely accept all that modern society imposes on its devotees. Inwardly he chafed, and outwardly was always something of a rebel, against the repressive and mechanical social conventions which rule the present time. In a high degree he was impressible to all the experiences of life, remembering moods and emotions both subtle and elusive. His *Child's Garden of Verses* is the chronicle of a childhood peculiar in its unforgotten imaginative products. The *aura* of a period and a world filled with shapes and sounds, too vivid to seem unreal, lingered in his memory through all the years of his mature manhood. So deeply had the scenes and impressions of his early life bitten into his mind that his most living thoughts were of those days which, to most of us, are soon forgotten.

Stevenson loved those writers of whom he said that they had been "eavesdropping at the door of his heart." He himself was like them. Again and again he draws back to his pages those readers whom he attracts at all, and each time the old charm is renewed with fresh relish and enjoyment. This undoubtedly is the test of a writer's permanence—the possession of that magic whereby a former spell is caused to operate upon a reader's heart, he knows not how and he cares not why; once drawn within the mystic influence of the wizard's circle, he surrenders to the power which is upon him and takes his intoxication with joy. First of all, Stevenson was an artist. He knew the value of words. He studied their shades and sounds. He understood how to make his narratives and descriptions cumulative in effect. For instance, what can surpass in beauty and potency the account in *Prince Otto* of Seraphina's spiritual rebaptism in the forest at night?

> At last she began to be aware of a wonderful revolution, compared to which the fire of Mittwalden Palace was but the crack and flash of a percussion cap. The countenance with which the pines regarded her began insensibly to change; the grass, too, short as it was, and the whole winding staircase of the brook's course, began to wear a solemn freshness of appearance. And this slow transfiguration

reached her heart, and played upon it, and transpierced it with a serious thrill. She looked all about; the whole face of nature looked back, brimful of meaning, finger on lip, leaking its glad secret. She looked up. Heaven was almost emptied of stars. Such as still lingered shone with a changed and waning brightness, and began to faint in their stations. And the color of the sky itself was the most wonderful; for the rich blue of the night had now melted and softened and brightened; and there had succeeded in its place a hue that has no name, and that is never seen but as the herald of morning. "O!" she cried, joy catching at her voice, "O! it is the dawn!" In a breath she passed over the brook, and looped up her skirts and fairly ran in the dim alleys. As she ran her ears were aware of many pipings, more beautiful than music; in the small dish-shaped houses in the fork of giant arms, where they had lain all night, lover by lover, warmly pressed, the bright-eyed, big-hearted singers began to awake for the day. Her heart melted and flowed forth to them in kindness. And they, from their small and high perches in the clerestories of the wood cathedral, peered down sidelong at the ragged princess as she flitted below them on the carpet of the moss and tassel.

To this artistic quality of Stevenson valuable testimony is borne by Sidney Colvin in the following word of reminiscence:

I remember the late Sir John Millais, a shrewd and very independent judge of books, calling across

> to me at a dinner-table, "You know Stevenson, don't you?" and then going on, "Well, I wish you would tell him from me, if he cares to know, that to my mind he is the very first of living artists. I don't mean writers merely, but painters and all of us; nobody living can see with such an eye as that fellow, and nobody is such a master of his tools."

Stevenson's vocabulary was particularly rich and noble. To him words were much like living things. He loved them not only for what they expressed, but for an intrinsic value which he was keen to discover. His choice of the beautiful and colorful was intuitive. Some have accused him of employing a style which was imitative, or at best but a compound of many others. "By the way, I have tried to read the *Spectator,* which they all say I imitate, and—it's very wrong of me, I know—but I can't. It's all very fine, you know, and all that, but it's vapid." He was an ardent and sincere student of the world's best literature; but all that he received from whatsoever source went into the alembic of his own mind, was fused in the heat of his own thought, and came out Stevenson. He was a maker of memorable phrases as well as a sane commentator upon life and conduct:

"Acts may be forgiven, not even God can forgive the hanger-back." "Choose the best if you can; or choose the worst; that which hangs in the wind dangles from a gibbet." "A fault known is a fault cured to the strong; but to the weak it is a fetter riveted." "The mean man doubts, the great-hearted is deceived." "Shame had a fine bed, but where was slumber? Once he was in jail he 'slept.'" "Disappointment, except with one's self, is not a very capital affair; and the sham beatitude, 'Blessed is he that expecteth little,' one of the truest and, in a sense, the most Christlike things in literature." "It is much more important to do right than not to do wrong; further, the one is possible, the other has always been and will ever be impossible; and the faithful designer to do right is accepted by God; that seems to me to be the Gospel, and that was how Christ delivered us from the law." "Ugliness is only the prose of horror." "O, if I knew how to omit, I would ask no other knowledge. A man who knew how to omit would make an *Iliad* of a daily paper." "To fume and fret is undignified, suicidally foolish, and theologically unpardonable; we are here not to make, but to tread predestined pathways; we are the foam of a wave, and to preserve a proper equanimity is not merely the first part of submission to God, but the chief of possible kindnesses to those about us." "The great double danger of taking life too easily, and taking it too hard, how difficult it is to balance that!" "The Bible, in most parts, is a cheerful book; it is our little piping theologies, tracts, and sermons that are dull and dowie."

Stevenson was a brilliant and entertaining conversationalist among his friends. "He radiates talk," says W. E. Henley, "as the sun does light and heat; and after an evening—or a week—with him, you come forth with a sense of satisfaction in your own capacity which somehow proves superior even to the inevitable conclusion that your brilliance was but the reflection of his own, and that all the while you were only playing the part of Rubinstein's piano or Sarasate's violin." His humanity was so large that his friendships were not confined alone to those who cultivated the literary life, but he bound to him with enduring ties of affection those who won his regard in various fields of activity. He never posed as a valetudinarian, nor played on the sympathies of the public, though he was upon perpetual flittings in search of health—now in Switzerland, now in the Adirondack Mountains, and now in the ends of the earth. "To me," he says, "the medicine bottles on my chimney and the blood on my handkerchief are accidents; they do not color my view of life; and I should think myself a trifler and in bad taste if I introduced the world to these unimportant privacies."

Stevenson came of good stock on both his father's and mother's side. His paternal grandfather was a civil engineer and built the Bell Rock lighthouse. The father of Robert Louis Stevenson was Thomas, the youngest son of Robert Stevenson. Robert Louis's mother, from whom he inherited his delicate constitution, was Margaret Isabella Balfour, youngest daughter of Rev. Lewis Balfour, minister of the parish of Colinton, in Midlothian. Robert Lewis Balfour Stevenson, as our novelist was christened, was born in Edinburgh, November 13, 1850. He was an only child, always feeble, and subject to extreme nervous excitement. An eager listener to tales of adventure and deeds of derring-do, he began early to try his hand at composition of his own. He failed to receive much regular schooling because of his infirm health. In his childhood he was characterized by the same power to charm that he so impressed upon others in his maturer years. The blood of the gypsy seemed to be potent in his veins, and he was a wanderer almost to the close of his life. It was hoped that he, too, would enter the family profession of civil engineer. He was entered as a student at Edinburgh University, and attended classes there as his health and inclination permitted. He was not a hard student at college; but in his own desultory way he was an ardent devourer of books, and at the same time kept his eyes wide open upon humankind. His reading ranged the entire field of English letters, and he was no stranger to the literature of other tongues.

In 1871, though he had manifested a degree of aptitude for the profession of civil engineer, it was concluded that neither his physical ability nor personal tastes would admit of his following the pursuit of his forbears, and he began to study law. He was admitted to the bar in 1875, but he was never to follow a lawyer's vocation. Stevenson's parents were of a religious temperament, but the novelist early revolted against the stern and forbidding aspects of the creed which was dominant in his father's house. He regarded all dogmatic formulation of theological opinions as an expression of the universal human need of something divine in the presence of the inscrutable mysteries which forever infold us here. Thus he soon found himself at variance with his father upon questions of faith. The father was a strictly orthodox, deeply religious Scotchman, with all that the terms imply. The son, early imbibing the spirit of freedom and toleration, chafed within the narrow bounds of the paternal belief, and at length broke away altogether, with what heart pangs between father and son few can know or understand, for they dearly loved each other and had been boon companions. Louis writes:

> The thunderbolt has fallen with a vengeance now. On Friday night, after leaving you, in the course of

> conversation, my father put me one or two questions as to beliefs, which I candidly answered. I really hate all lying so much now—a new-found honesty that has somehow come out of my late illness—that I could not so much as hesitate at the time; but, if I had foreseen the real hell of everything since, I think I should have lied, as I have done so often before. I so far thought of my father, but I had forgotten my mother. And now! they are both ill, both silent, both as down in the mouth as if—I can find no simile. You may fancy how happy it is for me. If it were not too late, I think I could almost find it in my heart to retract, but it is too late; and, again, am I to live my whole life as one falsehood? Of course it is rougher than hell upon my father, but can I help it? They don't see, either, that my game is not the light-hearted scoffer; that I am not—as they call me—a careless infidel. I believe as much as they do, only generally in the inverse ratio; I am, I think, as honest as they can be in what I hold. I have not come hastily to my views. I reserve—as I told them—many points until I acquire fuller information, and do not think I am thus justly to be called "horrible atheist." . . . Here is a good heavy cross with a vengeance, and all rough with rusty nails that tear your fingers, only it is not I that have to carry it alone; I hold the light end, but the heavy burden falls on these two.

He seems to recur to this unhappy period in his life in his portraiture of *Weir of Hermiston,* when he says:

> Sympathy is not due to these steadfast iron natures. If he [the old judge] failed to gain his son's friendship, or even his son's toleration, on he went up the great bare staircase of his duty, uncheered and undepressed. There might have been more pleasure in his relations with Archie, so much he may have recognized at moments; but pleasure was a by-product of the singular chemistry of life, which only fools expected.

As an example of his early power of description and his growing habit of observation, the following, written at eighteen, is an adequate specimen. In a letter to his mother he says:

> To the south, however, is as fine a piece of coast scenery as I ever saw. Great black chasms, huge black cliffs, rugged and overhung gullies, natural arches, and deep green pools below them, almost too deep to let you see the gleam of sand among the darker weed; there are deep caves, too. In one of these lives a tribe of gypsies. The men are always drunk, simply and truthfully always. From morning to evening the great villainous-looking fellows are either sleeping off the last debauch or hulking about the cave "in the horrors." The cave is deep, high, and airy, and might be made comfortable enough. But they just live among heaped bowlders, damp with continual droppings from above, with no more furniture than two or three tin pans, a truss of rotten straw, and a few ragged cloaks. In winter the surf

bursts into the mouth and often forces them to abandon it.

Already his was a deft hand at characterization, as evidenced in the following extract from his pen:

> Seven P. M. found me at Breadalbane Terrace, clad in spotless blacks, white tie, shirt, *et ceteræ*, and finished off below with a pair of navvies' boots. How true that the devil is betrayed by his feet! A message to Cummy at last. Why, O treacherous woman, were my dress boots withheld? *Dramatis personæ*: *pere* R., amusing, long-winded, in many points like papa; *mere* R., nice, delicate, likes hymns, knew Aunt Margaret (t' ould man knew Uncle Alan); *fille* R., *nommée* "Sara" (no *h*), rather nice, lights up well, good voice, interested face; Miss L., nice also, washed out a little, and, I think, a trifle sentimental; *fils* R., in a Leith office, smart, full of happy epithet, amusing. They are very nice and very kind—asked me to come back—"any night you feel dull; and any night doesn't mean no night: we'll be so glad to see you." *C'est la mere qui parle.*

In the same letter there are intimations of his later and mature style: "As my senses slowly flooded, I heard the whistling and the roaring of wind, and the lashing of gust-blown and uncertain flaws of rain. I got up, dressed, and went out. The mizzled sky and rain blinded you. . . . I stood a long while on the cope watching the sea below me; I hear its dull, monotonous roar at this moment below the shrieking of the wind."

The prevision of his early death is recorded again and again; not in any mawkish or sentimental manner, but as a thing already understood and accepted. The mingled gayety and melancholy which underlay his nature break forth quite spontaneously in the early letters which he indited to interested and affectionate friends: "When I am a very old and very respectable citizen, with white hair and bland manners and a gold watch, I shall hear crows cawing in my heart, as I heard them this morning. I vote for old age and eighty years of retrospect. Yet, after all, I dare say, a short shrift and a nice green grave are about as desirable."

In 1873 Stevenson's health quite broke down, and upon the advice of physicians he journeyed to the southern part of France. From this experience emanated his essay

"Ordered South," which was his first contribution to *Macmillan's Magazine.* At twenty-three years of age the future essayist and noveliest is already foreshadowed:

> I must tell you a thing I saw to-day. I was going down to Portobello in the train, when there came into the next compartment (third class) an artisan, strongly marked with smallpox, and with sunken, heavy eyes—a face hard and unkind, and without anything lovely. There was a woman on the platform seeing him off. At first sight, with her one eye blind and the whole cast of her features strongly plebeian, and even vicious, she seemed as unpleasant as the man; but there was something beautifully soft, a sort of light of tenderness, as on some Dutch Madonna, that came over her face when she looked at the man. They talked for a while together through the window; the man seemed to have been asking money. "Ye ken the last time," she said, "I gave ye two shillin's for your ludgin', and ye said—it died off into whisper. Plainly, Falstaff and Dame Quickly over again. The man laughed unpleasantly, even cruelly, and said something; and the woman turned her back on the carriage and stood a long while so, and, do what I might, I could catch no glimpse of her expression, although I thought I saw the heave of a sob in her shoulders. At last, after the train was already in motion, she turned round and put two shillings into his hand. I saw her stand and look after us with a perfect heaven of love on her face—this poor one-eyed Madonna—until the

train was out of sight; but the man, sordidly happy with his gain, did not put himself to the inconvenience of one glance to thank her for her ill-deserved kindness.

Here is another side of life which Stevenson portrays, and which reveals him in the character he always preserved as a clean man:

> I shall tell you a story. Last Friday I went down to Portobello, in the heavy rain, with an uneasy wind blowing *par rafales* off the sea—or, "*en rafales,*" should it be? or what? As I got down near the beach a poor woman, oldish, and seemingly, lately at least, respectable, followed me and made signs. She was drenched to the skin, and looked wretched below wretchedness. You know, I did not like to look back at her; it seemed as if she might misunderstand and be terribly hurt and slighted; so I stood at the end of the street—there was no one else within sight in the wet—and lifted up my hand very high with some money in it. I heard her steps draw heavily near behind me, and, when she was near enough to see, I let the money fall in the mud and went off at my best walk without ever turning round. There is nothing in the story; and yet you will understand how much there is, if one chose to set it forth. You see, she was so ugly; and you know there is something terribly, miserably pathetic in a certain smile, a certain sodden aspect of invitation on such faces. It is so terrible, that it is in a way sacred; it means

> the outside of degradation and—what is worst of all in life—false position. I hope you understand me rightly.

Stevenson's first meeting with Mr. W. E. Henley was in circumstances unusual and pathetic, the latter lying ill in a hospital from which he did not emerge for many weary days. The friendship thus formed continued until the end of the novelist's life. In this connection it is interesting to recall Mr. Henley's unique and satisfying series of poems entitled *In Hospital,* which could have been written only by one who had suffered the extremes of pain and languor and had passed through the scenes so vividly and adequately represented. Stevenson writes:

> Yesterday, Leslie Stephen, who was down here to lecture, called on me and took me up to see a poor fellow, a poet who writes for him, and who has been eighteen months in our infirmary, and may be, for all I know, eighteen months more. It was very sad to see him there, in a little room with two beds, and a couple of sick children in the other bed. A girl came in to visit the children, and played dominoes on the counterpane with them; the gas flared and crackled, and the fire burned in a dull economical

> way; Stephen and I sat on a couple of chairs, and the poor fellow sat up in his bed with his hair and beard all tangled, and talked as cheerfully as if he had been in a king's palace or the great King's palace of the blue air. He has taught himself two languages since he has been lying there. I shall try to be of use to him.

Stevenson's earliest thought of the South Sea islands as a sort of "earthly paradise" for the sick, wayworn, and weary is thus awakened, to be cherished in silence for more than fifteen years:

> Awfully nice man here to-night. Public servant—New Zealand. Telling us all about the South Sea islands till I was sick with desire to go there; beautiful places, green forever; perfect climate; perfect shapes of men and women, with red flowers in their hair; and nothing to do but to study oratory and etiquette, sit in the sun, and pick up the fruits as they fall. Navigator's Island is the place; absolute balm for the weary.

Our author triumphantly passed his examination for the bar at Edinburgh, but for him had been ordained something better than the law. In 1876, in company with Sir Walter Simpson, Stevenson undertook the canoe trip which resulted in the volume, *An Inland Voyage.* The open air, the delightful and various scenery, together with companionship of an agreeable nature, induced an almost boyish happiness and peace of mind. In 1878 occurred the autumnal tramp through the Cévennes chronicled so charmingly in *Travels with a Donkey.* During all this time he was more or less ailing, and occasionally he fell into black moods of despondency; but from these he quickly rallied, continuing his activities without pause, accomplishing the maximum of work despite his enfeebled physical condition, and so finally entering with assurance upon his chosen career of letters.

Stevenson first met in France the lady—Mrs. Osborne—who was afterward to become his wife. She had been unhappy in her domestic circumstances, and returning to her home in California, she determined to seek a divorce from her husband. Stevenson, hearing of Mrs. Osborne's intention, started for America, resolved to risk all in his attempt to support himself, and possibly a family, by literature alone. In San

Francisco, while waiting for affairs to unravel themselves with regard to his projected matrimonial adventure, he knew the pinch of real want. For a brief and unsuccessful period he was a reporter upon a San Francisco daily paper; often he was fairly in want of food; sick and all but penniless, a stranger in a strange land—this episode was the most distressing of his life. He himself thus recalls it: "I have to drop from a fifty cent to a twenty-five cent dinner; to-day begins my fall. That brings down my outlay in food and drink to forty-five cents, or 1s. 10½d. per day. How are the mighty fallen! Luckily this is such a cheap place for food." He was united in wedlock with the woman of his choice in May, 1880. Of his marriage he writes: "It was not my bliss that I was interested in when I was married; it was a sort of marriage *in extremis;* and if I am where I am, it is thanks to the care of that lady who married me when I was a mere complication of cough and bones, much fitter for an emblem of mortality than a bridegroom."

Stevenson arrived at his judgments by the way of his own modes of thinking and observing. His eyes as well as his mind were wide open, nor was his outlook upon the world that of the confirmed valetudinarian. He loved nature for its own sake, while his devotion to his kind was no less complete and intense. His spirits drooped low at times, as his fluctuating health dragged down the frayed and feeble body, but returning strength would restore his old vein of gayety. His sympathy and tenderness are shown again and again. On his emigrant trip across the plains he takes care of a babe for hours, that the weary mother may enjoy a rest. In San Francisco his heart is torn at the dying of a little child:

> My landlord's and landlady's little four-year-old child is dying in the house; and O, what he has suffered! It has really affected my health. O never, never, any family for me! I am cured of that. . . . Excuse this scratch; for the child weighs on me, dear Colvin. I did all I could to help; but all seems little, to the point of crime, when one of these poor innocents lies in such misery.

His literary likings were prompted by his delight in the craft which was dear to him as life itself. Thus he says:

> An art is a fine fortune, a palace in a park, a band of music, health, and physical beauty; all but love to any worthy practicer. I sleep upon my art for a pillow; I waken in my art; I am unready for death, because I hate to leave it. I love my wife. I do not know how much, nor can, nor shall, unless I lost her; but, while I can conceive of being widowed, I refuse the offering of life without my art. I am not but in my art; it is me; I am the body if it merely.

He was an austere critic of himself, not even his best work satisfying his exacting requirements or fulfilling his lofty ideal. No critic could point out to him any failure in his work of which he himself was not first aware. He was a stylist, it is true—what man is not who loves and studies the exquisite art of composition. Now and then he declares against style in favor of something else, but he gave unremitting attention not only to what he had to say, but how he said it; and, like every other artist, he knew well when he had done a good piece of work, and was filled accordingly with a generous glow and satisfaction. Few, perhaps none others, could have achieved what he did under disadvantages so great and continuous. He was wont to regard himself as a slow artificer in letters, but his slowness was rather in invention than in composition. He says: "I am still 'a slow study,' and sit a long while silent on my eggs. Unconscious thought, there is the only method; macerate your subject, let it boil slow, then take the lid off and look in—and there your stuff is, good or bad." Though he loved his tools, and wrought like a lover with them, he was occasionally haunted by the thought that his art might sometimes be too palpable. In his ordinary correspondence with his intimate friends there was scarcely a letter in which did not appear some striking allusion to books or bookmen, or to those who had labored before, or were laboring with him, in his chosen field. In every instance, the *obiter dicta* could have come only from an earnest student of life and letters.

Stevenson returned to England and Scotland in August, 1880, taking his new wife with him; thence he went to spend the winter in Switzerland. Returning to Scotland the following summer, he made an ineffectual attempt to secure the chair of history and constitutional law in the University of Edinburgh. Repairing to Switzerland in the autumn of 1881, he finished *Treasure Island, The Silverado Squatters,* and some of his most fortunate essays for the magazines. It is not possible here to follow in detail the endless journeyings of this frail man of letters in search of health. There is something pathetic but immeasurably courageous in this invalid author laboring always under difficulties, at times and for weeks together so feeble that he was forbidden even to speak lest the dreadful hemorrhages of the lungs should recur, indomitably gay, sweet, and debonair, praying only for strength that he might work and earn his daily bread. Stevenson's father bought for him a house at Bournemouth, England, which the novelist named Skerryvore, from one of the sea towns of the Hebrides, and in commemoration of one of his father's most notable engineering achievements. Here, though constantly in a precarious physical condition, he produced between the years 1884 and 1887 some of his best and most characteristic work.

In January, 1886, appeared *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,* which at once attracted wide attention; in the same year appeared *Kidnapped,* which repeated the success of the earlier production, and which Stevenson himself was wont to regard as the high-water mark of his creations. In August, 1887, his uncertain health made it necessary to try again a change of climate; accordingly, with his family, he came to the United States and spent seven months at Saranac Lake, in the Adirondack Mountains. In America, for the first time, he tasted the full sweets of a not unwelcome popularity, yet no man was ever more unspoiled by success than he.

Like most men of genius, Stevenson projected many works, few of which were actually accomplished, his delicate health and teeming brain interrupting and diverting his labors. Whatever he touched sprang into life. He had in him the power to put a warm, red, pulsing heart beneath the ribs of death. He was devoid of any petty jealousy toward men of his own profession. He recognized and rejoiced in all good work, from whatever source, with a fine and generous relish. In him there was a deep-lying vein of religious feeling, not of the cant kind, but healthful, manly, and reserved. Occasionally he seems to speak as an unbeliever, but at the core of him the essentials of the rugged faith of his native land were really vital and dominant. His distinction between the religious man and the pious man is finely drawn, but like himself in the originality of the point of view. His constant migrations and his oft-recurring and dangerous illness brought him to look upon death with no terror, but with the equanimity of a Christian and a philosopher; and when he expresses resignation it is not the resignation of either apathy or despair.

In his own way Stevenson was interested in questions of politics, and all matters of public concern received his intelligent and critical attention. Like many other men of genius he was not a model in the conduct of business affairs. He was generous to his friends, and his purse was ever open to unfortunate men of the pen or the press. His *bête noire* was the wind, probably because of the weakness of his lungs. It is interesting to observe how, again and again, in his correspondence as well as in his stories and essays, he speaks of the wind, and almost always with disfavor, though for the various scenes and nearly all the moods of nature he cherished an abiding affection. He was possessed of an old and rooted belief that he should die by drowning; which is but another instance of the fact that even ancient and persistent impressions are not to be relied upon, and may finally partake of the character of superstitions. He never outgrew some phases of his childhood, and the heart in his bosom was susceptible to youthful pastimes and enthusiasms to the very last:

> When a man seemingly sane tells me he has "fallen in love with stagnation," I can only say to him, "You will never be a pirate!" This may not cause any regret to Mrs. Monkhouse; but in your own soul it will clang hollow—think of it! Never! After all boyhood's aspirations and youth's immortal day-dreams, you are condemned to sit down, grossly draw in your chair to the fat board, and be a beastly burgess till you die. Can it be? Is there not some escape, some furlough from the moral law, some holiday jaunt contrivable into a better land? Shall we never shed blood? This prospect is too gray.

The idea of yachting had brooded long in Stevenson's mind, and at length culminated in an extended cruise in the schooner *Casco* among the South Sea islands. He had determined to invest ten thousand dollars in this sailing trip, from which he was destined never to return to the shores of England or America. It was on June 28, 1888, that he started from the harbor of San Francisco. After cruising about for several months he arrived, near Christmas time, at Honolulu, where he remained for six months. During this period he visited the leper colony at Molokai. His fine thoughtfulness and quick sympathy are beautifully shown in a letter to his wife:

> Presently we came up with the leper promontory—lowland, quite bare and bleak and harsh, a little town of wooden houses, two churches, a landing stair, all unsightly, sour, northerly, lying athwart the sunrise, with the great wall of the *pali* cutting the world out on the south. Our lepers were sent on the first boat, about a dozen, one poor child very horrid, one white man, leaving a large grown family behind him in Honolulu, and then into the second stepped the sisters and myself. I do not know how it would have been with me had the sisters not been there. My horror of the horrible is about my weakest point; but the moral loveliness at my elbow blotted all else out; and when I found that one of them was crying, poor soul, quietly under her veil, I cried a little myself; then I felt as right as a trivet, only a little crushed to be there so uselessly. I thought it was a sin and a shame she should feel unhappy; I turned round to her and said something like this: "Ladies, God himself is here to give you welcome. I'm sure it is good for me to be beside you; I hope it will be blessed to me; I thank you for myself and the good you do me." It seemed to cheer her up; but indeed I had scarce said it when we were at the landing stairs, and there was a great crowd, hundreds of (God save us!) pantomime masks in poor human flesh, waiting to receive the sisters and the new patients.

His pen picture of Father Damien is indeed most striking:

> Of old Damien, of whose weaknesses and worse perhaps I heard fully, I think only the more. It was a European peasant—dirty, bigoted, untruthful, unwise, tricky, but superb with generosity, residual candor and fundamental good humor: convince him he had done wrong—it might take hours of insult—and he would undo what he had done and like his corrector better. A man with all the grime and paltriness of mankind, but a saint and hero all the more for that.

Determined to renew his yachting expeence, in June, 1889, he left Honolulu, in the schooner *Equator,* bound to the Gilberts, in the western Pacific. Toward Christmas of the same year he reached Samoa. Here he bought the future Vailima on the mountain side, above Apia. He departed for Sydney, from which place, after a serious illness, he entered upon a devious voyage, in the trading steamer *Janet Nicoll,* among various remote islands. He finally returned to his Samoan property, where work had been going forward during his absence. He lived at Vailima from 1890 until the time of his death, four years later. His days there were passed with great zest in multiplied occupation. The natives knew him by the musical name of *Tusitala,* "teller of tales." In the year 1892 his health again broke sadly. Trips to Sydney and to Honolulu failed to benefit him, and his energies began to flag. His annual income during the last few years of his life was between $20,000 and $25,000, but his generosity was boundless, and he saved little. In the few months previous to the close of his life he seemed to be filled with a great weariness and to experience premonitions of his early decease.

The end came suddenly on the 3d of December, 1894. Stevenson had been working on *Weir of Hermiston* at the height of his powers. All the morning he had wrought in a glow of satisfaction which only the true artist can feel. At evening, while he was in the most buoyant spirits, he was struck down. His loved ones stood about him, watching the ebbing away of the life so dear to all—drinking the deep bitterness of that hour when human impotency is most sharply felt in the presence of the dissolution of nature's fondest ties. "He died at ten minutes past eight on Monday evening, the 3d of December, in the forty-fifth year of his age." The burial took place in the afternoon of the succeeding day. His dust lies on the summit of a mountain of his well-loved Samoa until the dawning of that morning when God shall summon all earth's sleepers to awake.

At his death Stevenson left two incomplete stories, *St. Ives* and *Weir of Hermiston,* both of these among the best products of his pen. His art ripened and improved to the very last. *St. Ives* was completed by Mr. A. T. Quiller-Couch, and *Weir of Hermiston* by Mr. Sidney Colvin, the latter adding one or two brief notes to the unfinished story.

INDEX

Abolitionist, 198.
"Accontius and Cydippe, The Story of," 69.
"Adam Bede," 42, 124, 125, 126, 128, 143.
Adirondack Mountains, 219, 237.
"Adonais," 96.
Adonis, 96.
"Æneid" of Virgil, 73, 90.
"Æschylus," 99.
Aldworth, 30, 43.
Alford, Dean, 19.
Allingham, William, 10.
American Constitution, 18, 32.
Andover, 187.
"Another Spring," 168.
Anstey, 41.
"Antiquary, The," 53.
Apia, 242.
Apostles, Society of, 20.
Arbury Farm, 116.
Argyll, Duke of, 11.
Arnold, Matthew, 11.
"Arts of Life, The Lesser," 63.
Atalanta's Race, 68.
Atlantic Monthly, 204.
Austen, Jane, 145.

Bacon, 19.
Baldasarre, 130.
Balfour, Rev. Lewis, 220.
Balfour, Margaret Isabella, 220.
"Banded Men, The Story of the," 72.
Barrie, J. M., 42.
Baudelaire, 155.
Beattie, 179.
"Becket," 39.
"Bellerophon at Argos," 69.
"Bellerophon in Lysia," 69.
Bell Rock Lighthouse, 220.
Besant, Walter, 41.
Bexley Heath, 62.
Bible, The, 180, 219.
"Biglow Papers," 186, 191.
Birchington-on-Sea, 164.
Black, William, 41.
Blackmore, R. D., 42.
Blackstone, 185.
Blackwood's Magazine, 94, 118, 132.
Blakesley, Dean, 19, 21.
"Blessed Damozel, The," 153.
Bonaparte, 103.
Boswell, 45.
Bournemouth, 236.
Boxley, 27.
Braddon, Miss, 42.
Brawne, Fanny, 104.
Brazil, 66.
Bronte, Charlotte, 138, 145.
Brookfield, 16, 19.
Broughton, Miss, 42.
Brown, Oliver Madox, 156, 164.
Browning, Mrs., 56, 144, 145, 167, 175, 211.
Browning, Robert, 10, 42, 56, 119, 156, 162, 175, 211.
Bryant, 192.
Buchanan, Robert, 161, 162.
"Bucolics," Virgil's, 179.
Buller, Charles, 19.
Burne-Jones, Edward, 54, 56, 58, 59.
Burns, 183.
Burton, Sir Frederick, 135.
Byron, Lord, 15, 16, 42, 91, 96, 99, 103, 179.

Caine, Hall, 42, 163.
Caius Cestius, 112.
California, 231.
Cambridge, 187.
Carlyle, Mrs., 47.
Carlyle, Thomas, 10, 20, 45, 46, 138, 175, 182.
Carroll, Lewis, 162.
Casaubon, Dorothea, 120.
Casco, schooner, 240.
Cavaliers, 184, 185.
Celtic race, 31.
Cévennes, 231.

Chambers, 95.
Chapman, George, 117.
Charmian, 103, 104, 106.
Chaucer, 17, 51, 53, 67, 88, 91.
"Child Christopher and Goldilind, Of," 79.
"Child's Garden of Verses, A," 214.
Chingford Hatch, 53.
Chopin, Frederic, 8.
Christ, 34, 35, 37, 107, 218.
Christianity, 33, 35.
"Christianity, Essence of," 117.
Clark, Cowden, 91.
Clarke, 90.
Cleopatra, 103.
Clough, A. H., 11.
Coleridge, 111, 193.
Colinton, 220.
Collinson, 152.
Colvin, Sidney, 216, 244.
"Commemoration Ode," Lowell's, 184, 204.
Concord, 182, 187.
Contemporary Review, 161.
Court of St. James, 186.
Coventry, 116.
Cowley, 179.
Cowper, 175, 181, 212.
Crawford, Marion, 41.
Crockett, 125.
Cromwell, 184.
Cross, J. W., 115, 140.
"Cupid and Psyche, The Story of," 69.

Damien, Father, 242.
"Daniel Deronda," 128, 140.
Dante, 179.
Darwin, Charles, 8, 21, 206.
"Death of Paris, The," 69.
De Vere, Aubrey, 11, 40.
Deverell, Walter Howell, 160.
Dickens, 115, 125, 145.
Divine Personality, 36.
Dodgson (Lewis Carroll), 162.
"Don Juan," 96.
"Doom of King Acrisius, The," 68.
"Dora," 47.
Doyle, Conan, 42, 125.
Durer, Albert, 59.

"Ebb Tide, The," 213.
Edinburgh, 220, 230.
Eliot, George, 39, 42, 45, 115 et seq.
Elmwood, 177, 180.
Ely, Dean of, 19.
Emerson, Ralph Waldo, 29, 119, 175, 182, 192.
"Endymion," 94, 95, 96.
English Illustrated Magazine, Macmillan's, 78, 227.
Epping Forest, 27, 52, 53.
Equator, schooner, 242.
"Ere Dwellers, The Story of the," 72.
Essex, 53.
Evans, Mary Ann (George Eliot), 115.
Evans, Robert, 116.
"Eve of St. Agnes, The," 97.
Exeter College, 54.

"Fable for Critics," 191.
"Faerie Queene, The," 179.
Fairlop Oak, 52.
Falstaff, 227.
Farringford, 30.
"Felix Holt," 128, 143.
Feuerbach, 117.
"Fifine at the Fair," 162.
Fitzgerald, Edward, 10, 14, 17, 45.
"Fleshly School of Poetry, The," 161.
Florence, 128, 130.
Forman, Buxton, 72.
Forster, John, 11.
"Fostering of Aslaug, The," 69.
"Frithiof the Bold, The Story of," 72.
Froissart, Chronicles of, 56.
Froude, 48.
Fytche, Elizabeth, 15, 17, 18.

Gifford, 93, 94, 96.
Gilberts (islands), 242.
"Gilfil's Love Story, Mr.," 122, 123.
Gilman, Mrs., 189.
Gladstone, W. E., 8, 10, 22, 30, 138.
"Glittering Plain, The Story of the," 78.
"Goblin Market," 167.
Godwin, 92.
Goethe, 31, 44, 87, 100.

"Goethe, Life of," 132.
"Golden Apples, The," 69.
Gothic Architecture, 53.
Greek Mythology, 90.
"Grettir the Strong, The Story of," 72.
Griff, 116.
"Guggum," 161.
"Guinevere," 33, 45.
"Guinevere, The Defense of," 59, 61, 66, 68.

Hale End, 52.
Hallam, Arthur, 11, 19, 22, 25, 27.
Hallam, Henry, 11.
Halleck, 192.
Hampden, 184.
Hardy, Thomas, 41, 138.
"Harold," 39.
Harvard, 178, 204.
Harvard Law School, 189.
Hawthorne, 125, 192.
Haydon, 92.
Hazlitt, 88, 92.
Heath, Douglas, 19, 21.
"Heath Slayings, The Story of the," 72.
Hebrides, The, 237.
Henley, W. E., 219, 229.
"Hen Thorir, The Story of," 72.
High Beech, 27.
Highgate Cemetery, 141.
"Hill of Venus, The," 69.
Hippocrene, Fountain of, 188.
"Hogni and Hedinn, The Tale of," 72.
Holmes, O. W., 8.
Honolulu, 240, 242, 243.
Hooker, Bishop, 103.
Hope, Anthony, 125.
Hope (poet), 179.
Horace, 138, 179.
Houghton, Lord. (See Milnes, Richard Moncton.)
"House of Life, The," 159.
"House of the Wolfings, A Tale of the," 78.
"Howard the Halt, The Story of," 72.
Howard, John, 103.
Howitt, Mary, 45.
"How Lisa Loved the King," 137.
Hunt, Holman, 152.
Hunt, Leigh, 90, 92, 110, 112.
"Hunting of the Snark, The," 162.
Huxley, 40.
"Hyperion," 99.

"Idylls of the King," 33, 59, 61.
"Inland Voyage, An," 231.
"In Hospital," 229.
"In Memoriam," 11, 30.
"Irene," 192.

James, Henry, 41.
Janet Nicoll, schooner, 242.
"Janet's Repentance," 123.
"Jason, The Life and Death of," 66, 71.
"Jenny," 157.
"Jesus, Life of," 117.
Jex-Blake, 58.
Job, Book of, 34.
Johnson, Lionel, 78.
Jowett, Benjamin, 10, 28, 44.
"July," 69.

Keats, John, 42, 85 et seq., 155, 175, 212.
Kelmscott, 51, 71, 80, 163.
Kemble, J. M., 10, 19, 21.
"Kidnapped," 237.
King Arthur, 33.
King's College, 151.
Kingsley, 115, 125.
Körner, 90, 101, 109.

Ladislaw, Will, 120.
"Lady of the Land, The," 69.
Lamb, Charles, 138, 212.
"Land East of the Sun," etc., 69.
Landor, 175.
Lawless, Miss, 42.
"Lay Sermons," Coleridge's, 193.
Lear, Edward, 10.
"Legend of Jubal, The," 137.
Lemprière's Dictionary, 90.
"Les Misérables," 143.
Lewes, George H., 39, 117, 118, 132, 133, 134, 140, 141.
Lincoln, Abraham, 8.
Lincoln, Blakesley, Dean of, 19.
Locker-Lampson, Frederick, 134, 135, 141.
London Chronicle, The, 142.
London, Trench, Archbishop of, 19.

Longfellow, 192, 199, 204.
Loring, G. B., 179, 189.
"Love is Enough," 71.
"Love of Alcestis, The," 69.
"Lovers of Gudrun, The," 69.
"Love's Nocturn," 165.
Lowell, James Russell, 175 et seq., 211.
Lowell, Mabel, 203.
Lowell, Robert, 177.
Lushington, Edmund, 21, 45.
Lushington, Vernon, 58.
Lyall, Edna, 42.
Lydgate, Rosamond, 120.
Lytton, 115.

Macaulay, 138.
Maitland, Thomas (Robert Buchanan), 161.
Majendie, Lady Margaret, 42.
Malory, Sir Thomas, 56.
"Man Born to be King, The," 68.
"Man Who Never Laughed Again, The," 69.
Marlborough, 53.
Marston, Philip Bourke, 156.
"Maud," 30, 43.
Maurice, Frederick D., 10.
Melema, Tito, 129, 135.
Mendelssohn, Felix, 8.
Meredith, George, 41, 119, 138, 163.
Merivale, Dean of Ely, 19.
Methodism in England, 125.
Methodists, 124.
Middle Ages, 55.
"Middlemarch," 120, 128, 140, 143.
Midlothian, 220.
Millais, 152, 216.
Mill, John Stuart, 117.
"Mill on the Floss, The," 128.
Milnes, Richard Moncton, 8, 10, 19, 38, 103.
Milton, 33, 42, 179, 184.
Minerva, 124.
"Minstrel, The," 179.
"Miscellanies," Carlyle's, 183.
Molokai, 241.
Monkbarns, 53.
Montagu, Basil, 92.
Montaigne, 119.
Monteith, 19.
"Moosehead Journal," 176.
Morley, John, 70.
Morris and Co., Decorators, 62.
Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co., 64.
Morris, William, 51 et seq., 155.
"Morte d'Arthur," 56.
"My Confidences," 134.

Navigator's Island, 230.
New Poems by Christina G. Rossetti, 169.
New Zealand, 230.
"News from Nowhere," 52, 77, 78.
North American Review, 204.
North British Review, 95.
Norton, Charles Eliot, 204.

"Ode to the Nightingale," 100.
Odyssey of Homer, 73.
"Ogier the Dane," 69.
"Old Poets, Conversations on Some of the," 190.
Oliphant, Mrs., 42.
"Ordered South," 227.
Ormond Yard, 65.
Osborne, Mrs. Fanny, 231.
Ouida, 42.
Ovid, 151.
Oxford, 55, 56, 57, 58, 62.
Oxford and Cambridge Magazine, 58.

"Palace of Art," 23.
Palgrave, F. T., 10.
"Paradise, The Earthly," 68, 71, 74.
Parliament (English), 186.
"Peace and War," 143.
Poe, Edgar A., 8, 153, 155, 199.
"Poems by the Way," 74.
"Poems by Two Brothers," 15.
"Poems, Chiefly Lyrical," 21.
Portobello, 227, 228.
Prayer, 35.
Preraphaelites, 54, 151, 152, 160.
Prince Albert, 29.
"Princess, The," 29, 40.
"Prince Otto," 215.
"Promise of May," 39.
"Proud King, The," 68.
"Pygmalion and the Image," 69, 70.
Pym, 184.

Quarterly Review, 23, 24, 92, 93, 94, 95, 111.
"Queen Anne" Architecture, 62.
Queen Elizabeth's Lodge, 53.
"Queene, The Faerie," 91.
Quickly, Dame, 227.
Quiller-Couch, A. T., 244.

Raphael, 107.
"Raven, The," 153.
Reade, 115, 125.
Red House, The, 62, 64.
Reynolds, J. K., 106.
Rice, S. S., 19.
"Ring Given to Venus, The," 69.
Rogers, Samuel, 10.
"Roi the Fool, The Tale of," 72.
Roman Catholicism, 33.
"Romola," 42, 128, 131, 143.
"Roots of the Mountains, The," 78.
Rossetti, Christina G., 149, 150, 164, 166 et seq.
Rossetti, Dante G., 56, 58, 62, 71, 149 et seq., 211.
Rossetti, Gabriele, 150.
Rossetti, Maria, 150.
Rossetti, William Michael, 149, 156, 164, 169.
Rouen, 55.
Roundheads, 184.
Rubinstein, 219.
Ruskin, John, 58, 138, 152.

"Sad Fortunes of Rev. Amos Barton, The," 123.
"Saga of Gunnlaug," etc., 72.
Saintsbury, Mr., 67.
Sallust, 151.
Samoa, 242, 244.
San Francisco, 232, 240.
Sand, George, 132.
Saranac Lake, 237.
Sarasate, 219.
Savonarola, 128, 129.
"Scenes of Clerical Life," 42, 118, 122, 123, 132, 140.
Schiller, 90, 101, 105, 212.
Scott, Bell, 58.
Scott, Walter, 53, 115, 125.
Selden, 184.
Sellwood, Emily, 10, 27, 28, 29.
Sermon on the Mount, 34.
Severn, 101, 111.
Shackford, W. H., 178, 180.
Shakespeare, 117, 119.
Shelley, 88, 92, 95, 96, 112, 155.
Shelley's poems, 20.
Shorthouse, J. H., 42.
Siddal, Elizabeth Eleanor, 160, 161.
Sidney, 184.
"Sigurd the Völsung, The Story of," 73.
"Silas Marner," 42, 128.
"Silverado Squatters, The," 236.
Simpson, Sir Walter, 230.
Skerryvore, 236.
Socialism of Morris, 74.
Socrates, 107.
"Son of Crœsus, The," 69.
Son of Man, 34.
"Sonnets from the Portuguese," 159.
Sorrel, Hetty, 135.
South Sea Islands, 230, 240.
"Spanish Gypsy, The," 137.
Spectator, 10, 45, 217.
Spedding, James, 10, 19, 39.
Spencer, Herbert, 117, 118.
Spencer, Hon. W. R., 91.
Spenser, 88, 91, 179.
"St. Ives," 244.
St. John, 34.
Stephen, Leslie, 229, 230.
Stephens, 152.
Stevenson, Robert, 220.
Stevenson, Robert Louis, 41, 125, 175, 211 et seq.
Stevenson, Thomas, 220.
"Story of Rhodope, The," 69.
"Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, The," 237.
Strauss, 117.
"Sundering Flood, The," 79.
Swift, Dean, 175.
Swinburne, Algernon C., 61, 67, 163.
Switzerland, 219, 236.
Sydney, 242, 243.
Symons, Arthur, 59.

"Talking Oak, The," 43.
Taylor, Henry, 10.
Tennant, 19, 21.
Tennyson, Alfred, 7 et seq., 56.
Tennyson, Charles, 27.
Tennyson, Emily, 22.

Tennyson, Rev. George Clayton, 15.
Tennyson, Hallam, 12.
Tennyson, Lionel, 37.
Thackeray, W. M., 11, 115, 125, 138, 145.
"Theophrastus Such," 128.
Theydons, 52.
Thomson, 19, 21.
Thoreau, 182.
"Thorstein Staffsmitten, The Tale of," 72.
Ticknor, 204.
"Tom Jones," 143.
"Travels with a Donkey," 231.
"Treasure Island," 236.
Trench, Archbishop of London, 19.
Trinity College, 19.
Trollope, 115, 125.
Tudor House, 163.
Tunbridge Wells, 27.
Tusitala, 243.
"Two Voices, The," 26.
Tyndall, John, 10, 37, 38, 40.

"Ulysses," 47.
University of Edinburgh, 236.

Vailima, 242.
Vallance, Aymer, 54.
"Vastness," poem, 38.
Vaughan, 155.
Venables, G. S., 10.
Vergil, 151, 179.
"Viglund the Fair, The Story of," 72.
"Vision of Sin, The," 47.
"Vision of Sir Launfal," 191.
Vivisection, 45.
"Völsung Saga," 72.

Walthamstow, 52.
Walton, Izaak, 52.
Wansted, 52.
Ward, Mrs. Humphry, 140.
Washington, 176.
"Watching of the Falcon, The," 69.
"Water of the Wondrous Isles, The," 79.
Watertown, 189.
Watts, G. F., 10.
"Weary in Well Doing," 169.
Webster, 185.
Wegg, Captain, 138.
"Weir of Hermiston," 220, 243, 244.
"Well at the World's End, The," 79.
Wellington, Duke of, 32.
Westminster Review, 117.
Weyman, S. J., 125.
"When I am Dead, My Dearest," poem, 168.
White, Maria, 189, 190, 192.
White, W. A., 189.
Whitman, Walt, 32, 156.
Williams, D. H., 192.
Windermere, 105.
"Wood Beyond the World, The," 78.
Woodford, 52.
Woodstock, 51.
Woolner, Thomas, 10, 152.
Wordsworth, 9, 29, 40, 42.
"Writing on the Image, The," 69.

"Year's Life, A," 190.

Zoilus, 111.
Zola, 40.

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